

MUDBLOOD FEVER AND LINGERIE

By: Tnteacups

SUMMARY: The Dark Lord failed to rise in their fourth year, and Draco finds himself drawn to the unthinkable. Hermione's life begins shifting after she makes some hidden changes. Mixed emotions, a dirty little secret, bruises, and guilt all add up to one decision. Will doubt, jealousy, or a confession win in the end?

COMPLETE INFORMATION

Located: Harry Potter > Het - Male/Female > Draco/Hermione

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COMPLETE

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Chapter 1: Mudblood Fever and Lingerie

A/N: This is an alternate HP Universe, Voldemort failed to rise in book 4. It is now year 6, for our main characters, and our story starts on a Friday in November.

Thanks goes out to my editor, Final, who's been assisting with the grammar, misunderstandings, and minute details that I'd seen in my head, but not remembered to put in. Thank you kitty~

"Careful Granger, don't want to let everyone see your knickers." Malfoy egged, to the mass chuckling of Slytherins, as Hermione landed on her rear, rather ungracefully, her stockings, and knees showing as her robes landed high on her legs.

"Shove off, Malfoy." Ron Weasley replied on her behalf, as her cheeks flushed red, and she took hold of her friend's hand, standing again. She brushed her robes off, ignoring the blond boy, and trying unsuccessfully to corral the hideous creature Hagrid had assigned to each of them.

"One day, Harry, I'm going to snap. And that git is going to be first on my list." Ron was seething, still angry over the loss of the most recent Quidditch game, and every small annoyance made him grumble. Hermione tuned out their ranting voices, and put her focus on the slimy charge trying to pull her along, careful not to fall over again.

Draco stood, bantering with his three best friends, loudly bashing Gryffindor's performance the previous Saturday. They were all guffawing at his words, as he teased Granger for falling on her rear, displaying her pale legs, and he watched her straighten herself out, ignoring him completely, except for the pink washing her cheeks with embarrassment. He'd joked about her knickers, but couldn't help imagining what kind she wore. Would they be granny sized, as Pansy claimed, in her high-pitched whine? Would a girl like Granger put much thought into her underwear at all? He imagined she was wearing something skimpy, black, and sexy. Something not at all like her, and even more embarrassing, had they shown. Perhaps a thong?

"Draco?" Pansy was staring at him, looking worried. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine, just lost in thought," he admitted, keeping his tone cool, giving her his trademark smirk. "Imagining that giant oaf getting a piece taken out of him by one of his 'beloved' creations." He lied smoothly, taking solace in the idea he'd conjured. It would be justice, for making them constantly look after monsters, and unnamable creatures he'd cooked up. Care of Magical Creatures was no one's favorite class, though the golden trio seemed to put more effort into pretending they liked it more than anyone. Likely for the sake of their demented, hairy friend.

"I hate this class." Goyle whined, something Draco detested.

"You hate every class." Draco shot at his friend, putting the Mudblood's knickers far from his mind. His dark, twisted fantasies could wait 'til later.

"Get away from me, Ronald!" Granger shrieked, pointing her wand at him.

"Fine!" Weasley shouted back, stalking away in huff, his clumsy footsteps retreating up the hall, stomping angrily away.

"Having a row?" Draco asked, stepping around the corner he'd previously been hiding behind.

"Not that it's any of your business." She replied scathingly, her eyes glaring daggers at him.

"Isn't it?" He replied smoothly, checking his perfect nails absently. Her eyes widened, and she looked him up and down.

"I'm not sure what you mean, but whatever it is, I'm NOT interested." She said turning her back on him, and taking a few step away. He caught up to her easily, taking her arm. She spun to glare at him.

"Don't you want to experience someone who knows what they're doing?" He asked suavely, before she could speak, placing a finger on her lips parting them gently.

"I don't-" She began to argue, but he silenced her with his own lips, pressing them to hers, letting his hand tangle in her hair. She relaxed in his arms, a small sigh escaping her lips, as her arms wrapped around him.

He pushed her into an empty classroom, lifting her to a desk as their mouths clashed, his hands exploring her petite body. She was smaller than Pansy, thinner, and shorter. She felt girly, and weak, her hands brushing through his hair, her voice panting his name softly as he let his hands run up her legs, lifting her robes. She was warm, and wet, her underwear soaked through, the small strip of black fabric all that kept him from taking her. The lacy black thong was easy to move aside, and he stuck his fingers in her, making her gasp, and grab his shoulders roughly, her head falling back in pleasure.

"Please, Draco..." She panted, her eyes finding him, pleading with him to stop torturing her.

"You want me to fuck you?" He asked crudely, enjoying how her cheeks reddened, even as she nodded, suddenly shy. "Say it."

"Fuck me, Draco." He obeyed, pushing in, watching as her face twisted with discomfort, and she squeezed his shoulders, whimpering.

"Oh god, this is your first time?" He asked rhetorically, pushing past her maidenhead, and holding her hips in place, as she squirmed. She nodded, her eyes squeezed tight.

"Good." He said, thrusting in and out, taking his pleasure from her. It wasn't long before she was moaning, hugging his shoulders as he slammed into her over and over again, rocking her back and forth on the desk, her inner walls squeezing around him as she was forced to cum repeatedly.

He came, staying inside her, letting his seed go deep inside her, before pulling away, and opening his eyes.

He pulled out his wand, cleaning the mess from his stomach, and hand, muttering quiet spells, so his roommates kept sleeping soundly. He wasn't too embarrassed about wanking, but if any of them knew the things he'd just fantasized, he would die of embarrassment. He felt dirty just thinking of touching the Mudblood. At least he could imagine she was an untainted mudblood, untouched by anyone else. He sighed, falling quickly asleep, feeling a mixture of satisfaction,

and self-disgust.

Hermione lay awake, banishing the thoughts that kept trying to intrude, rolling restlessly around her bed. She couldn't forget what Pansy had said about her underwear, and the shame that it'd been true. She hadn't put much thought into what her undergarments looked like, too busy with studying, and spending time with her family. She wasn't sure why it bothered her so much, it wasn't as though she had a boyfriend to wear fancy knickers for. She wondered silently if her fellow sixth-year Gryffindor girls made fun of her knickers behind her back. She sighed, feeling a new wave of embarrassment, and resolved to take care of her worries tomorrow.

"Ginny?" She called, finding the fifth-year in the common room, and standing awkwardly by the plush chair the redhead occupied.

"Yeah?" Ginny asked, looking up from her game of exploding snap against her brother.

"Do you want to come up to my room for a minute?" She asked, giving her younger friend a look she was sure her female-challenged brother wouldn't notice.

"Sure." Ginny said, her eyebrows rising with curiosity at her friend's I-need-to-talk-to-you look. She followed Hermione up to the empty sixth-year girls' room, and sat on Hermione's bed, lounging comfortably against her pillows, as Hermione sat on the edge, wringing her hands uncomfortably.

"What's up?" Ginny prompted, wondering what could've been the cause for Hermione's distress.

"I um..." Hermione took a calming breath, remembering how Ginny had never judged her. "I need new underwear, and I was wondering if you had any ideas?" She ended it in a question, her face flushing bright red.

"Sure," Ginny said amicably, and rolled from the bed, heading toward the door. "I'll be right back." Hermione sat in silence, waiting for her friend to return, lost in thought.

"Here you go." Ginny's reappearance startled her, and she looked to the door, just in time to catch the fluttering pages that flew through the air at her.

"It's a catalogue for just what you need." Ginny said, sitting back on the bed next to her friend, as Hermione opened the glossy magazine. There were pictures of witches flaunting gorgeous knickers and brassieres. The colorful pictures went from one pose to the next, showing off front and back of the garments.

"It's a witch-only company. You have to know someone who orders from them to get the catalogue," Ginny explained, looking over her friend's shoulder. "They're inexpensive, so mum likes them, and they have a little of everything. They deliver by owl, with discreet packaging, so even if you get it at breakfast, it's not embarrassing," she seemed to know exactly what Hermione was going to ask before she could even ask it. "If you want to order, just write this reference number down, that's next to each piece, with your name, and put in an envelope with the money. You write this address on the envelope, nothing else, and send the owl off. You can put as many reference numbers on a sheet of paper as you're willing to pay for. They may come in separate deliveries if you order too many for the owl to carry," Hermione gave Ginny a curious look, and Ginny laughed. "Some rich Slytherin girl last year ordered a bunch, and got five packages delivered at breakfast, all at once. Had to carry them all back to her dorm." She and

Hermione giggled, thinking about it.

“Thank you, Gin, you’re a lifesaver.” Hermione said, hugging her best friend.

“No problem. Every girl needs cute knickers,” she said, standing, and heading again for the door. “Unless you show someone the catalogue on purpose, or they’ve got their own, it’ll just look like a clothes magazine.” She added, opening the door, to leave Hermione to look it over at leisure.

Hermione took her time looking each piece over, before pulling out a sheet of paper, and writing a few numbers down. She ordered five sets of matching undergarments, in red, gold, black, white, and beige, and three extra pairs of knickers that had no matching counterpiece, but cute patterns. She wrote the address on an envelope, and put the paper, and the galleons in it, sealing it, and heading to the owlery to send it off.

Draco made his way up the steep stairs carefully, trying to avoid the majority of owl dung as he approached the owlery, clutching a letter for his parents inside his pocket. He entered the dim tower, looking up for his eagle owl as his eyes adjusted.

“There’s no name, just the address.” The lecturing voice caught his attention away from the rafters, and he looked across the dropping-strewn room to see a bushy mass of hair bent over a table.

“Sending for a wig, Granger?” Draco sneered, insulting the first thing he saw, feeling his chest pound at the memory of what he’d wanked to last night. Being forced into a room with her after imagining that was really too much.

“Mind your own business, Malfoy.” She said, turning her back on him to finish attaching her envelope to the owl’s leg.

“Only an address? Don’t you even know your wig maker’s name?” He teased, glancing up to find his own bird, and holding out his arm as soon as he caught its eye. She gave him a nasty look as he took a table of his own to attach his letter.

“Sending your dad a letter of everything you’ve whined about this week?” She shot back, sending the owl flying from the window, and turning to face him with a dirty look.

“For your information, Granger, I don’t whine,” he said, feeling his competitiveness rise. “And if I did, I doubt I’d send my father letters about Weasley’s non-existent manners, and Potter’s dwindling intelligence.”

To his absolute surprise, Granger laughed, the quick, single exclamation of humor surprising both of them, as she clamped a hand over her mouth, looking just as astonished as he felt. She faked a cough, covering her laugh, and continued to glare at him, as she swooped out of the owlery, hiding her disloyal humor in her escape.

“Have fun hanging out with those two gorillas.” He muttered more to himself than to her departing back, sending his owl gracefully out the window, and following her footsteps from the tower.

A/N: Just for clarification, there will be two main classes mentioned throughout this fic, Care of Magical creatures, which will be on Fridays, and Potions, which will take place on Mondays. I'm actively trying to keep the dates in order, and properly adding up. If a calander helps, (It's helped me tons), I can add a link to each chapter's timeframe.

Please leave a review, letting me know how you feel about it, or any problems you notice!

Chapter 2: Panties, Potions, and Put-Downs

Monday morning Ginny hurried over, helping Hermione untangle the small package from one of the two owls that had swooped in front of her, landing amidst breakfast platters, and a flurry of other owls.

"Wazh aw dish?" Ron asked through a mouthful of breakfast, eyeing the two packages the girls were gathering, as they climbed over the benches, leaving the two boys gaping in confusion as they hurried from the great hall, grinning, and bouncing.

"I think those two are up to something..." Ron said after swallowing, and looking at where the two had vanished through the door.

"Well noticed, Weasley," the cold drawl pulled their attention to the figure who had stopped just short of passing them. "If you pay very close attention, maybe you'll figure it out, before they put the spiders in your bed."

Ron's face blanched as Malfoy walked away, his trademark smirk in place, not sparing a backward glance.

Draco sat, wondering how thick the bumbling duo really was. The way the two girls had bounced out of the Great Hall looking suspiciously cheerful said they'd ordered something stupid, and girly. Probably from some witches only catalogue. It was likely some assortment of baubles, or love potions. He scoffed just thinking about it. His mother had a few of those types of magazines, and had gotten useless trinkets, and half-potent spells from them.

He hadn't pegged Granger or Weasley for those kind of girls, but he guessed every girl gave in to the promises printed in those dumb pages eventually.

Hermione dropped the packages on her bed, and opened the first small package, holding up the plain red brazier, and matching red knickers. They had no pattern or lace, but the shape was cute. Much cuter than the waist-high white ones she wore currently.

"How do they get the size right?" She asked, holding the bra against her shirt.

"Probably a sizing spell," Ginny replied, holding up the black set, and eying Hermione with waggling eyebrows. "Did you have someone in mind?" She asked, fingering the black lace, and centered bow.

"Not really. I just thought it was cute." She said, suddenly wondering if any of these would be less embarrassing to fall in, and accidently show to the classmates. The Slytherins would probably tease her no matter what she wore. She had a brief image of Malfoy's smug face, looking down at her knickers, his eyes lingering on the black lace. She shook her head,

dislodging the thought. He was never going to see them if she could help it. She could imagine the reactions that his followers would have at the sight of these. Crabbe and Goyle would probably stare dumbfounded, and aroused. Pansy would tease her, to the delight of the other Slytherin girls. She couldn't decide whether Malfoy would tease her, or stare with his two goons.

She decided not to think about it, pulling her robes over her head to try the new garments on before she had to hurry to class.

Draco made his way to potions, his bag slung over his shoulder, stomach comfortably full from a recent lunch. He took his usual place at the far end of the room from the golden trio.

"Today, I'd like you all to pair up." Professor Slughorn was saying, followed by immediate shuffling of people claiming partners. Malfoy turned to look for a suitable partner, no longer having his friends in the class to pair with.

"Malfoy! Granger seems to be lacking a partner as well. You two team up. Lovely pair- there you go." Professor Slughorn said, moving along the rows to search for other lingering students.

Draco looked toward the trio of Gryffindors. They were all glaring at him. He stayed where he was, enjoying his uncrowded table, and unwilling to join the three that surrounded their claimed area.

"Miss Granger, if you would be so kind as to gather your things, and move to young Draco's table..." Slughorn said. Draco let his head dip forward, hiding an amused grin at the teacher's verbal prod. He heard the slamming of items next to him indicating Granger's presence.

"Granger." Draco greeted her, wiping his amusement from his face, and replacing it with a look of distaste

"Malfoy." She replied coldly, keeping her eyes on Slughorn as he explained why they had all been paired up.

"This potion is a very complicated brew. It takes two people to make properly, since it's a fertility potion. We won't be trying these, obviously..." He looked round the room pointedly. "Anyway, they won't be put to use, but it is a very difficult potion, and requires precise timing, and teamwork. The results should be different for each pair, and I will grade on how well it was made, not on its effectiveness."

When he finished, Draco opened his book, to the designated page, and began scanning the ingredients, and pulling them swiftly from his potions kit.

Granger was doing the same, her book propped on the table as she rummaged through her kit, setting her own supplies on the table. They didn't speak as he lit a fire under the cauldron, and finished skimming the instructions. She began chopping daisy roots silently, not looking at him, and he set himself to measuring powdered beetles. They worked in silence for several minutes, until he was finally forced to speak.

"I'm going to add the beetles. Count of three?" He offered, knowing she had to add the daisy roots at the same time. She nodded, lifting a handful of the roots, and holding them over the

simmering cauldron full of water.

“One, two, three.” He said, rhythmically bobbing his head with each number, opening his hand at the end of three. Granger dropped hers in the same instant, pulling her hand away to continue preparing more ingredients. They worked in almost silence, only speaking to create the brew, which was turning a beautiful shade of silver, and gleaming as though lit from within.

“And now...” Draco paused, reading the last ingredient silently. Two hairs. One from each of them. He looked over at her, watching as she quickly pulled one of her own hairs out, and held it over the cauldron, only looking at him when he didn’t do the same.

“Malfoy? Your hair.” She prompted, pulling hers back slightly, to prevent accidentally adding it too soon. He nodded, looking away from her silver-lit face, and glanced around the room for the first time since starting the potion. He’d been so absorbed in the potion he hadn’t noticed the other colors of the potion. Potter and Weasley’s was a jarring shade of red, lighting them up like a macabre theatre. A theatre for monkeys. They were staring at the book, their faces an inch from it, as if they were having trouble reading the text.

There was a light blue, a dark purple from two Ravenclaws, and a bright green from the only other two Slytherins in the class.

Draco plucked a single silvery blond hair out, and held it out, staring into Granger’s eyes as he counted.

“One. Two. Three.” They dropped the two hairs, and broke gazes to watch them dissolve in the silver liquid. His silver hair blended into the mixture immediately, and he watched hers dissolve slower. The color seemed to leech out into the potion, her hair turning silvery, and the potion slowly bronzing as the two colors mingled. As the bronze color reached the edge of the potion, Draco looked at Granger’s captivated face, and couldn’t help having a go.

“Feel like testing it, Granger?” He asked, letting his face twist into his usual cruel smile. She looked up at him with a nasty look, her mouth opening to retort, but he cut her off. “You’d better find someone who’d actually want to have your half-blood children, then.” He turned away to whisk his ingredients back into his case. He could feel the outrage pouring off of her, and couldn’t bring himself to look, feeling the underhanded comment bring a twinge of guilt. She was a bright witch. Pity she had to be a mudblood, and Gryffindor, or she may have had a chance.

“Lovely color,” Slughorn hovered next to their table, looking into their shared cauldron. “You two did splendidly!” He said boisterously. “Pity you aren’t friends.” He looked regretful, walking off. Draco looked over, noticing the color had changed. A dull brown was spreading from the middle, making the whole thing look like mud. Draco kept his thoughts to himself, ignoring the fierce way the witch next to him was shoving her things away.

“Maybe someday, some woman will let you ruin her bloodline with your hateful, evil genes.” She swept away, leaving him speechless, and stunned. He hadn’t expected a comeback, especially not one that stung that badly. The image of his father’s forearm flashed through his mind, and he stared into the cauldron, seeing only the black mark that tainted his family. Was he doomed to be as cruel, and uncaring as his father? He hoped not, his childhood an ongoing cruel joke that he refused to push onto another young Malfoy.

He didn’t even notice that their potion had turned a murky black, before he left the classroom,

reflecting his own thoughts.

“Malfoy!” The call stopped him short, and he turned to see the trio heading toward him. Ron leading, with Harry holding the back of his robe, and Hermione dashing after, looking vexed.

“Leave it, Ron!” She called, catching up, just as Weasley lifted his wand, pointing it straight at Draco.

“Going to curse yourself again, Weasley?” Malfoy shot, reminding him of their second year.

“You little-”

“Ron!” Granger cut him off, pushing his arm down, away from Draco’s face, and she and Potter managed to steer him away. “Don’t bother with him. He’ll realize eventually that no one likes him.” She glared over her shoulder at him. Draco grinned back smugly, unwilling to let her see his disquiet mind.

“Run along, weasel,” he called, “Don’t want to hurt yourself, do you?” Weasley struggled harder against his friend’s restraining arms, and Malfoy snickered, watching him fight for freedom.

“Malfoy!” He jumped, turning again to see Slughorn beckoning him over. He shuffled over, wondering if he was in trouble.

“Yes, Professor?” He asked, re-entering the now-empty classroom.

“I’d like you to take a good look at this potion.” Slughorn was indicating the green potion from his two house-mates.

“It’s green, professor.” He said, feeling like a small child, confused by some metaphor he didn’t yet understand.

“It is. Because the girls put all of their Slytherin pride into it. It’s a perfect emerald shade.”

“Yeah.” Draco agreed, looking over at the Ravenclaw duo’s.

“Theirs is this dark purple. I assume they don’t like each other much, but paired together, also due to their house,” Slughorn observed, and gave it a stir. Draco watched how it glittered at movement. “Tiny little sparkles of cooperation.” Slughorn said, sounding sincere

“Potter and Weasley’s... Well...” They both looked toward the red eye-sore at the back of the room. “Best friends, so it’s a bright, clear color,” he said, walking over to it, giving it a stir as well. “Streaks of gold. They worked well together, but... Not at all fertile.” He gave a chuckle, and Draco pulled a sour face, trying not to think of anything involving that.

“You and Miss Granger’s...” He was walking over to the thick black potion at the front. “Started off wonderfully. Clear, and a solid color. Not just streaks of cooperation. The entire potion was silver. I saw that.” He admitted, nodding his head sagely. Draco stayed silent, looking at the now black potion. He’d mucked it up by opening his cruel mouth.

“I’m sorry, Professor.” He said, looking at his shoes, meaning the apology.

"I know. I'd like you to look at the potion, and try to get it back to the bronze you two mixed. If you can do that, I won't take points from Slytherin for what I saw in the corridor." He went to his desk, leaving Draco to stare into the potion, willing it back to its former color. Draco tuned out the shuffling papers, and stared into the black depths, thinking of Granger next to him, chopping her daisy roots. She'd been civil the whole class, helping him make a perfect potion. He doubted very much that anyone else in the class could have managed that same level of efficiency. Her face had been lit by its silver glow as she watched their hairs dissolve, turning it a bronze. The same color as the bronze flecks in her eyes. He imagined those eyes trained on him, unmarred by hatred. She'd looked at him in an almost worried manner when he'd hesitated to put his hair in. Why had he ruined it? Just to amuse himself? He thought of other ways he could amuse himself with her. His fantasy came back to him full force, and he closed his eyes, seeing her brown eyes locked on him, her head tilting back in pleasure.

He bit his lip and opened his eyes, shifting uncomfortably as he looked into the cauldron, his knickers significantly tighter as his arousal pressed into them.

"Good job!" He looked up to see Slughorn watching him, staring at the color reflecting from the cauldron. Draco looked down, seeing the bronze they had mixed. What Slughorn couldn't see from his chair were the harsh streaks of flame dancing across the top. Draco hurried from the room, hoping the flames vanished before the Professor saw them.

Fantasizing about the mudblood again? Unacceptable. He pushed her from his mind, determined to ignore her until he could get his irritating lust under control. Maybe a tussle with Pansy would help...

Chapter 3: Mixed Emotions

Hermione wiped the tears from her eyes, and whispered the counters to her silencing spells. She didn't want Lavender or Parvati to hear her crying. It would be too hard to explain why. Neither were muggleborn, and she doubted they would understand how deeply Malfoy's words had cut her. She'd wanted to hit him. Instead, she was crying, alone in bed. Again.

She rolled over, remembering the feeling of her fist hitting his face in third year. It brought a small smile to her lips, and she dozed in and out of sleep, imagining hitting him again, watching him go sprawling across the floor. She thought of Ron. He didn't seem to mind that she was muggle-born. He'd wanted her well enough before Lavender had sunk her claws into him. Maybe she was just feeling pent-up tension, and needed a release. Ron had been good for that at least.

"Come here, 'Mione." He whispered, lying next to her quietly. Lavender was just in the next bed, and she had no idea. Ron kissed her, softly, making her whole body feel inflamed.

"I need this. I need you," he whispered, his hands running along her body. "No one else will ever be good enough."

"Oh, Draco..." The name slipped out of her mouth, and she looked up, horrified, at Ron's face.

"Malfoy?" He asked, stunned, his face dumb, twisting into rage. "Malfoy!?"

"No, I-" She tried to calm him, knowing how he had to feel, unsure where the name came from.

"You want Malfoy?"

"Of course she does, Weasel," the cold drawl wrapped its arm around her shoulders. She looked up into silver eyes. "No one but me will ever be good enough."

"No..." She felt like she was spinning, the two silver orbs tangling her mind.

"No one else deserves you. We make a perfectly balanced pair." He sounded too reasonable as the orbs got bigger. She felt a searing heat on her lips, and the orbs vanished, leaving the feeling of hands on her hips, long fingers gripping her perfectly, lifting her onto her bed. The heat was flooding through her, making her need this. Need him.

"Draco..." The name fell from her lips as they met his, as he pushed her robes out of the way, reaching bare skin, and her heated core.

"You're beautiful." He whispered, his blond hair framing his face, his smug smirk in place as he looked down at her bare body. Her face flushed, and she looked away.

"You'll always be the most beautiful." Ron whispered, kissing her neck.

She bolted upright, panting, and looked at her curtains. She was alone within them, no blond sneer, and no amber lies. She could feel her heart racing, and felt disgust ripple through her. She couldn't believe she'd dreamt of Ron saying such things, or Malfoy. Neither was realistic, and neither would happen. Or happen again, in Ron's case.

"Beautiful..." She muttered to herself, as though cursing it, laying back on her bed. There was no sunlight coming in, so it had to still be early morning. She tried to sleep, but couldn't seem to force her brain off. She kept thinking of her dream. Neither scenario had been realistic, but they'd both been arousing. And she could feel the result keeping her awake. She tentatively slid a hand across her thigh, lifting her nightgown, and touching the pair of brand-new knickers. They slid off easily, and she resumed rubbing herself, closing her eyes, and imagining.

"Mione." The panting voice was Ron's his hands roaming over her body, familiar with the shape, the feel. He always got right to the action, sliding in as quickly as possible, making her wiggle, and adjust to the invasion.

"Aww, yeah..." He moaned, touching one of her breasts as he moved too quickly to the main event, always hastier than she'd like.

"Feel like testing it, Granger?" The voice was warm, and teasing, fingers sliding across her stomach, pale against her tan skin. Blond hair tickled her thighs as his head dipped between her legs, taking her into his mouth, and forgetting himself.

"Let me..." She panted when he came back up, and sank to her knees, undoing his jeans, and pulling his erection out. It was warm in her mouth, fingers brushing through her hair gently, encouraging words whispered above her.

"Come here." He sounded demanding as he pulled her up, pressing his lips to hers, unable to resist any longer. His face was above hers, pristine, his hair combed back as he brought her to ecstasy.

She opened her eyes, breathing heavily, trembling as she cleaned herself up, and donned her knickers, pretending she hadn't just gotten off thinking of that whiny prat. Was he still whiny? She couldn't recall any proper whining from him this year, only a bit of complaint here and there. Hermione thought of Ron, and remembered what Malfoy had said in the owlery. She fell asleep, grinning, thinking of how accurately he'd described how she sometimes felt about her two best friends.

Chapter 4: Hidden Thoughts

Draco slid onto his usual potions stool, waiting for class to start, and pointedly not looking back at the trio. His dreams had been terrible the previous night. He'd woken up lonely, even with Pansy curled into his side. She hadn't been as satisfying as he'd hoped, her simpering voice ruining any attraction he felt. He'd managed to climax, but beyond that, he wanted to pull his own hair out, and try with someone less irritating. The mudblood seemed like some taboo itch under his skin, making him feel ashamed, and aroused at the same time. He felt less ashamed of himself when the sex he imagined wasn't romantic. When he took her forcefully, making her cry out, and say lewd things. Imagining her sluttily coming onto him made him feel a bit better, so he could pretend he didn't enjoy it as much as he really did.

"Last lesson, we had a few very good potions. Malfoy and Granger, your potion was excellent, a perfect example of teamwork." Slughorn complimented them. Malfoy made a nasty face, at the mention of working with a mudblood.

"Today is a another paired lesson. Same pairs!" He called, waving to the room. "It'll be easier to improve with a partner you're familiar with, than a new one."

Draco kept his eyes forward, refusing to look back as Granger approached. They didn't even greet each other as Slughorn began lecturing briefly, setting them to their task. Draco set about opening his text, and pulling his ingredients out. Granger got the cauldron boiling, filling it with water from her wand, and setting the fire underneath.

Draco began preparing his ingredients, trying his best to ignore the swishing robes next to him, the smell of shampoo that floated across to him. He recognized the scent from the prefect's bathroom, one of the frothy pink taps. He banished the image of Granger in a tub of pink froth, giggling merrily.

"I'd... Um..." He choked, unable to get the words he meant to say out. Granger ignored him, glancing only briefly in his direction before returning to her own work. She'd taken note of which ingredients he'd taken out, and took out the others, every other item listed.

"I'm sorry." He forced the words out, letting them hang in the air. He looked over at her, and then back at her two friends. Weasley was glancing up occasionally, as if monitoring for insults. Potter was reading, his face an inch from the page again. Granger was staring at him in confusion.

"For the last potion. What I said made it go wrong. I won't ruin this one." He promised, feeling proud to be as good as he was at potions. She said nothing, just returned to her own tasks. He let the silence envelop them, hoping she wouldn't tell her friends that he'd apologized at all. He thought about his dream, his terrible fantasy. How would she react if he actually tried to

convince her to sleep with him?

"Hey, I was just wondering if you'd shag me, so I can mark you off of some stupid mental checklist." Yeah, that would go great. He sighed, and turned to her.

"Ready for the teeth and nails?" He asked, holding up his handful of goblin fingernails. Her face looked a tad pink as she held up her own handful of teeth, over the pot.

"One. Two. Three." He counted, and they dropped. When she turned away, he noticed her cheeks kept the pink color. Had she been touched by his apology? He doubted it.

"I'm ready with the lacewing flies, whenever you have those-" She held up a small jar, with three live leeches in it. He counted, and they dropped. They kept going, neither speaking their thoughts, and neither saying anything thoughtless.

"Good work, Granger." He complimented her, forgetting for a moment that she was a Gryffindor, that they weren't really friends, and that he couldn't act on his desires.

"You as well." She replied, politely, looking into the potion they'd made. This one had also included one of each of their hairs, but had leeches the hairs of color, and caught on fire. The white potion was flaming slightly, and Malfoy silently hoped it was what the potion was supposed to do, not a creation of his lust.

"Good work. I wasn't expecting the flames, almost no one gets those right in classes," Slughorn passed, noting. "Ten points each to Gryffindor, and Slytherin." Hermione's face turned pink again, and she bottled a bit of the potion, corking it carefully to keep the flames going inside the small bottle.

"You know what that potion is, right?" Draco whispered noting how she slipped it into her bag discreetly. No one but he had seen her take it.

"Yes. But it's a perfect example." She said, as though it made perfect sense. It was a dream draught, that would only provide dreams of the opposite person. He lifted an eyebrow, but said nothing further, noting again, how her cheeks reddened. A small part of him hoped she'd take it herself, and dream of him. Maybe it'd make her come to him, offer herself willingly before he was forced to chase her.

"No. I will not chase her," he thought to himself, "If she won't come to me, I won't act on this stupid infatuation." He'd made his mind up, resigned to wanking until someone else caught his fancy.

"I will not blush. I will not blush." Hermione thought to herself, ignoring the thoughtful expression on Malfoy's face. Whatever he was thinking about, it didn't involve her. He had no cause to think she'd use the draught. They hated each other, and if he ever found out about her fantasy, she would be mortified.

"Nice flames, how'd you do that?" Ron was there, staring into their cauldron. "No one else did. It's not in the book..." Hermione scoffed.

"Not everything is in that book, Ronald." She replied, nodding toward where Harry still had his nose in it.

"Never said it was." He sounded defensive. Hermione felt herself feeling on guard after her dream last night. What would Ron have thought of it? Nothing good.

"You two seem to act like it. We just followed the instructions. Perhaps Malfoy and I are just more focused?" She tried, feeling her face heat at the thought of being so close to Ron, and Malfoy at the same time. If either found out about her sick fantasy, even just the Malfoy part, they'd both be disgusted.

"Sure. Whatever." Ron let it go, moving back to his own table. Slughorn was walking up to the table, and he whispered in Malfoy's ear. Malfoy nodded, and began putting his supplies away.

"What'd he say?" Hermione hedged, hoping her partner didn't get offended. He'd promised not to ruin this potion, so hopefully he would keep his words in check.

"Wants me to stay after class." Malfoy said easily, not even seeming to think about it as he spoke. Hermione let the short conversation die, wondering if she should rejoin her friends, or stay with her potion. She cleaned up her area, and sat uncomfortably on the stool next to Malfoy, picking up one of her unfinished books, and opening it to where she left off. She sat bent over the book in her lap, so absorbed, she didn't notice the blond watching her out of the corner of his eye, his face blank as he observed her reading.

"What book is that?" He asked, curiosity finally taking hold.

"Harold K. Lamier's 'Vegetables, Herbs, and Magical Roots'." She replied, not looking up from the book. He snorted, taking no interest in the book, and looked back into the potion. The flames were dwindling, but still visible.

"Don't read it, then." She replied, offhandedly, as if replying to Harry, or Ron scoffing at a book.

"I already have. It was awful." He said, watching the flames dance higher on the potion.

"Oh." Hermione seemed at a loss for words, her face having risen from the book to look at the blond boy next to her.

"You're not the only one who can read." Malfoy sounded defensive as he glanced over at her surprised expression, looking a bit embarrassed about what he'd said.

"I know, I just..." she came up short, not sure how to finish her thought. She was so used to Ron and Harry having no interest in studying, and everyone else seemed to be uninterested in it, or her. It was strange, speaking to Malfoy in an almost friendly manner.

"If you want an interesting book, try 'Poisonous Plants and Animals of South America'." His face was smug, and superior, even though the words were friendly enough. He was doing his best to keep a civil tongue, but his face still held his true feelings written across it.

She stuck her nose back in her book, avoiding further civil conversation. If she wasn't too careful, she'd give her imagination more fodder to use against her. The return of her thoughts on that subject made her cheeks burn, and her mind reel. He was sitting right here. What if he pulled her aside after class, into an abandoned classroom, and just started kissing her? Her imagination ran wild, and she didn't realize her eyes were no longer on the page, but rather

staring into space.

Draco watched her eyes glaze over as she blushed. A glimmering caught his eye, and he looked over, seeing the potion leaping with vibrant flames once again. He looked back to her, remembering the flames from their previous potion. Was this one similar? Was she thinking something inappropriate? He let his mind wander, testing his theory as he watched the flames, and imagined pulling her into the storeroom, and taking her by the hips, pushing her against a shelf, and kissing her until she couldn't breathe.

The flames danced higher, and he forced his imagination away, staring at Slughorn until every smidgen of lust was gone. The flames dwindled, and Granger seemed to come out of her daze as well, looking again at her book, hiding her face with her bushy brown hair.

He stayed behind after Slughorn had dismissed them, staying on his stool, and ignoring the witch departing next to him.

"Well, m'boy. Good to see you and Miss Granger getting along so well." He couldn't tell if the Professor was joking or not, so he stayed quiet.

"I wanted to talk to you about those flames," his stomach sank. Slughorn had to know what they meant. "You and Miss Granger were the only pair to concoct them. Do you know what they signify?"

"I think so." Draco answered in a defensive tone, feeling his face flush.

"Good. Then you won't be too surprised by what I wanted to talk about." Draco looked anywhere but Slughorn's face, wanting anything but to have this conversation.

"I don't think you have to worry Professor. It's just an infatuation, and it's one-sided. I don't even know why it happened." Draco admitted, feeling strange, talking openly about his lust for the mudblood.

"It most definitely is not one-sided," Slughorn laughed, holding his large belly with one hand. "The flames only happen if it's mutual." He chortled, taking in Draco's surprised look.

"She..." He suddenly thought of her glazed look. She'd been imagining him just then? He couldn't think past that understanding.

"Now, it seems that as you two aren't friends, I thought I'd offer a bit of friendly advice." Malfoy stared, still dumbstruck.

"The whole castle has a non-conception charm on it, just in case. We all know what being a teenager is like, and no one expects you to be perfect. However," Slughorn continued, seeming to ramble on, even though Draco wasn't responding. "Don't cause a scene. Don't do anything after curfew, and Merlin's beard, don't brag about it."

"She's a mudblood," Draco finally stammered, realizing that last comment would never happen, regardless. "My father would kill me."

"Even so, keep in mind that you can get points taken for acting rashly, or being too obvious," Slughorn advised, leaning back in his chair. "Inter-house flings are always more noticeable."

Draco took that in, turning it over in his mind. Of course they were. If your partner shared your house, you had easy access to their bed. If they didn't you had to get creative. Just like his every fantasy of Granger in classrooms, and closets.

"Thank you Professor." Draco said, standing after Slughorn said nothing further. He left the room in a daze, thinking over what he'd been told. Granger felt the same.

She'd filched some of the dream draught! He knew that she was going to take it. Maybe he could influence it. He turned on his heel and walked right back to the potions room.

Slughorn glanced up, but when he noticed that Draco was dipping a ladle into his own potion, he looked away, and began humming as though he hadn't seen anything.

Chapter 5: Dreams Don't Make It Real

Hermione slid her hand down his chest, marveling at how real it felt. If she hadn't known she was dreaming, she would have thought herself awake, and the blond in front of her, real.

"Like what you see, Granger?" His voice was silky, inviting her in.

"More than I thought." She admitted to dream-Draco, touching him again, and wondering if it was really how he looked, or if her brain was supplying imaginary details for things she hadn't really seen.

"It's not fair that you're still dressed," Draco pouted, his lips curling into a smile after a few seconds, as he moved closer. "But I can take care of that." He pressed their lips together, lifting her robes up, leaving her in her stockings and knickers. She pressed closer to him, letting her hips graze his. He was already hard, and his boxers were a thin barrier between him, and her belly.

"Mm, Malfoy..." She murmured as he gripped her slim waist.

"It's Draco." His voice was husky, filled with desire. Hermione didn't repeat it, feeling her face heat at the informal name. His face was buried in her neck, kissing, and nipping at the sensitive skin of her shoulder, and collar. His hand wrapped around her, easily unhooking her bra and pulling it away, his fingers skimming her breasts, making her shiver with anticipation.

"Enjoy that, Granger?" He asked, sounding full of himself, gripping her a bit more roughly, and letting his face fall to take her nipple into his mouth. She gasped, her breath hitched in her throat, and he bit the small bud softly. She ran her fingers through his hair, looking down at his face pressed into her chest.

He let his tongue swirl around, and trail up to her collarbone, his hand shimmying her knickers down while he was bent. His fingers quickly found her wetness, and slid across the opening, bringing her taste away with his touch. He pressed his fingertips to her lips, and enjoyed how easily they parted, how her tongue darted out to lick herself off him.

"Wow, Granger, you're shameless," He teased, his grin widening, obviously appreciating her actions. "Fantasizing about me in class, and now this? What AM I going to do with you?"

She met his silvery gaze. His teasing was empty, his eyes holding more lust than Ron's ever had as he watched her suckle on his fingers. She took them completely into her mouth, letting them reach her throat, enjoying the way his face twisted in torture.

"That should be a crime..." He whispered, pulling his fingers out, and grabbing the back of her head, pulling her into a rough kiss, his mouth demanding against hers. He guided her backwards, onto her bed, leaning over the top of her as they kissed, one hand pulling his own knickers away. He crawled on top of her, laying her backward, their legs intertwined as he let his hands explore all of her.

His skin was smooth under her fingers, his chest and stomach more muscled than her previous fantasies.

"Say you want me, Granger..." The words were right in her ear, his breath tickling her hair.

"I want you." She didn't hesitate, the throbbing between her legs impatient, and demanding attention. He dipped his hand between her legs again, his fingers sliding easily inside, and she closed her eyes, enjoying how his fingers felt, moving back and forth slowly, teasing her into a frenzy. Her nails bit into his shoulders, her chest rising and falling rapidly with aroused pants, her voice catching as he brought her a hairsbreadth from climax.

"Don't stop..." She begged, her mind fogged with bliss, and frustration as he pulled his fingers away.

"Don't you want something better?" He asked, and she felt the warm, solid shaft pressing against her, rubbing slowly across her opening, taunting her with more gratification.

"Please..." She moaned, grabbing his platinum hair, and pulling him in for a kiss. He slid himself inside her, feeling her gasp against his mouth, her back arching slightly as he pushed all the way in.

It felt strange, and dreamlike, not quite as intense as real sex, but the pressure and wetness were delightful, her stomach pressing into his, her face hiding in his chest as he began a rhythmic pace, pushing her closer to the orgasm he'd teased her with.

She moaned, her mouth hanging open in surprise as he filled her, stretching her beyond what she was accustomed to. He was steady, and swift, his hands and lips trailing along her as he watched her enjoy him. She stared right back, his grey eyes holding hers as he slid a hand into her hair, pulling her head back, to bite at her neck.

She moved her hips in time with him, enjoying the pace, and how deep he felt inside her.

"You're... So much... Better..." She panted, feeling like this dream-Draco was worlds beyond Ron. Perhaps it was her imagination providing everything she needed in a partner. She wasn't about to ponder too deeply, and ruin the dream.

"Better?" Malfoy's hips slowed, but kept delving as deeply as possible, his eyes locking on hers, his expression showing interest through his lusty gaze.

"Uhhg, yes." She said, enjoying as he buried himself inside her.

“Better than...?” He prompted, smirking down at her, making her blush, as she answered.

“Better than Ron...” She whispered, looking away from dream-Draco’s eyes. Even in her dreams it was embarrassing to admit.

Malfoy had stopped moving, and she peeked up at him, wondering if she’d upset him. Could you upset a dream?

“Better than Weasley?” He asked, his eyes narrowing, as he grinned maliciously. She felt a twinge of fear at the look in his face. Was he going to stop? Was the dream going to end? Would he hate Ron so much, even in a dream?

“Want to see how much better it gets?” He asked, his face close to hers, his expression not at all angry, but full of competition. She nodded mutely, unsure whether it even COULD get better. Malfoy pulled away from her, giving her little time to frown as he grabbed her hips, and rolled her over, lifting her ass into the air against himself. He plunged back in, setting a faster pace, hitting hard, and fast.

Her eyes rolled back, and she clutched at the sheet, groaning as he drummed into her, letting him take her wildly. If she’d thought it couldn’t get better, dream-Draco proved her wrong.

She felt close to orgasm, but hard as he was going, as great as it felt, she stayed right on the threshold, panting, moaning, and unable to cum. She crunched her eyes closed, bouncing backward against him. A hand snaked into her hair, and she was yanked backward, her scalp tingling as Malfoy pulled her back against him, his hand reaching around her face, taking her chin, and sliding his fingers back into her mouth. She felt depraved as she licked at them, his other hand around her waist, keeping her against him.

“Hermione...” He moaned into her ear, sounding desperate, and needy.

“Hermione...”

“Hermione!” She opened her eyes to see Parvati right in her face, shaking her awake. “You’re going to miss breakfast!”

Hermione sat up, face flushing with embarrassment as she stretched, and tried to put the dream from her mind, hoping she hadn’t muttered something humiliating in her sleep. It was time to get back to school, studying, and not thinking about her unfulfilled needs.

She was glad that she shared Herbology with her two best friends, and was able to avoid Malfoy for most of the week, keeping her eyes off him, and her mind away from bad thoughts. When Friday approached, she sat up in bed, groaning, and trying not to think of Care of Magical Creatures. It would be doubly horrible, as she’d be facing Malfoy, and those terrible beasts Hagrid called babies.

“Ter’d day, we’ll be lookin’ inta summat a litt’l differen’,” Hagrid said once the whole class had gathered. “This is a griffin.” Hagrid had led them to a gated pasture several yards from his hut.

“It looks dangerous...” Ron muttered to Harry under his breath, taking in the sharp claws, curved beak, and powerful limbs. It had a rope around its neck, keeping it grounded, and attached to a thick wooden pole in the middle of the paddock.

"Beau'iful, innit?" Hagrid commented, looking around at the class's reaction. Hermione nudged her two friends in the ribs, and put on a giant grin, pretending she enjoyed looking at the dangerous beast. Hagrid grinned back, and made his way around to a gate, letting himself into the enclosure.

"Like what you see, Granger?" The cold sneer had her full attention, reminding her instantly of her dream earlier that week, and she turned to see the pale face looking directly at her.

"Maybe if you're polite, it'll ask you to marry it." Pansy added, and all the Slytherins guffawed at her taunt, but Hermione looked away, trying to forget the images his words had brought forth. The group shuffled toward the gate, where Hagrid was waiting for them, and eagerly began telling them all the wonderful things about griffins.

"Maybe if you're nice, you could touch it." The hushed words in her ear seemed to be an add-on to Pansy's taunt, but with her mind on the dream, and the silver eyes so close when she turned, her mind raced to outrageous places. She turned her face away quickly, hiding her scarlet cheeks, and hurrying after her friends.

"What'd he say?" Ron asked, sounding instantly suspicious as he watched Hermione hurry away from Malfoy.

"Nothing." She replied, trying to ignore his existence.

"If he said something to you Hermione-" Ron began, only for her to cut him off.

"I can take care of myself. He didn't say anything important." She added, hoping to keep him from getting too upset. She didn't want to bring attention to Malfoy at all.

"What'd you say to her, Draco?" Pansy asked, her voice grating on his nerves. He hadn't intended for her to insult Granger, but he refused to tell her off. He'd have to act normally, especially if he was going to taunt Granger discreetly with their dream. He didn't think she knew it had been a shared experience, as she hadn't said anything about it to him, or acted any differently, and he planned on using that to its fullest.

"Just calling her names." He smirked at his friends, and shrugged it off as though it could have been any insult.

"I'll get her to come begging," he thought as he watched her converse with her two stooges, "Then, maybe after I fuck her, I can forget about it, and stop thinking about her so damn much."

He'd found that when he tried to sleep, she invaded his thoughts, keeping him awake, keeping him from satisfaction, and rest. Even Pansy had noticed how sleep-deprived he was getting, dark circles almost constantly under his eyes, his pale skin seeming even more whitewashed, and his hair seeming to muss at every disturbance. He kept slicking it back, trying to keep himself looking as unbothered as possible.

He'd found himself staring across the great hall at her as she ate, watching her lips move over her fork, her tongue lick a bit of sauce from her finger. He wondered constantly how she'd react if he pulled her away from her friends, and held her, forcing his lust to a finish. He refused to do it. She would come to him.

"Careful, Potter, your legs might blind someone!" Pansy called across the paddock as Potter scrambled away from the claws of the beast, his pasty knees visible below his bunched robes. Weasley and Granger shot rude looks toward the bunch of Slytherins, earning them a few more hoots of derision. Malfoy ignored both sides, pretending to pay attention to the oaf's lesson.

A/N: If you're liking it so far, let me know. :D There will be a new chapter up every day until I start running low on my already-written stock.

Chapter 6: Crass Comments and Comprehension

Hermione took her usual place in potions next to Harry and Ron, opening her book, and tuning out the babbling of the unstarted class.

"'Poisonous Plants and Animals of South America'?" Ron's voice interrupted her, barely a paragraph later. "Planning a trip soon, Hermione?" He sounded bewildered at her choice of text.

"No, but that doesn't mean the book isn't interesting." She said, looking up at him with a pitying look. A movement at the front of the class caught her eye, and she glanced away from Ron's puzzled face to see Malfoy smirking back at her. He'd heard, and knew that she was reading the book he'd suggested. She looked away, finding Ron's face no more comforting, and tried to continue reading.

"I'll never understand her." Ron muttered to Harry, making Hermione's heart twinge painfully. She'd thought for a while that maybe he had understood her, that he'd appreciated her for her mind. Lavender had proved her wrong.

She glared into the book, not seeing the words, and instead, fighting back sudden tears pricking at her eyes. She glanced toward the front of the class, daring to peek at the most recent subject of her dreams. She doubted he'd ever treat her better than Ron, but at least she'd expect it from him. His cruel statements never cut half as deep as Ron's thoughtless comments. She caught his grey gaze, and thought of second year, when Ron had defended her after Malfoy called her a mudblood for the first time. At least Ron wasn't bigoted, or felt she was lesser, and disgusting. Her dreams of him were realistic, even before their first time. Her dreams involving Malfoy were unhealthy, and beyond impossible.

The pale grey eyes that turned toward the now-speaking professor had never looked at her kindly. Malfoy would never be more than a sick fantasy.

She set herself to making her potion, ignoring both her friends, and her insane crush. She could ignore at least one of them forever.

"Forget your brush at home, Granger?" Draco teased as they left the dungeon after class. She hadn't even looked at him all class, seeming in a foul mood.

"Shove off, Malfoy." Potter defended her as she kept walking, ignoring his insult entirely.

"Just wondering if she actually brushes her hair. I bet Weasel's fingers get tangled in it when he tries snogging her. Not that it would matter, since he probably doesn't know what else to do with

them.”

“Ron and I are not snogging each other.” She’d turned around at that. She sounded defensive, and looked angry.

“I know what to do with my hands!” Weasley shouted, clenching them into fists, and glaring at Draco menacingly.

“Yes, very good for you, Weasley,” Draco sneered sarcastically, thinking of how he could throw another jab at Granger. “But have you ever had a witch beg you not to stop? Or have they all just wanted something better?” He narrowed his eyes at Weasley, wondering if Granger would recognize his words. Weasley had lunged for him, wand outstretched, only for his two friends to grab him, and pull him away.

“He’s trying to provoke you,” Granger said, yanking at one arm, even though her eyes were locked on Draco’s. “Just ignore him.”

“Not here, Ron!” Potter was saying, knowing Slughorn could come out of his classroom at any moment.

“That’s not even the best insult I’ve got!” Malfoy called after the trio retreating up the stairs. “Don’t you want to see how much better it gets?” He let his words linger in the air a few moments, before turning to head to his own common room, wondering just when Granger would decide she’d had enough.

Harry and Hermione dragged Ron up the stairs, the task becoming easier as they reached the top, Ron settling into more of a grumbling mood than a fighting one. Hermione kept her eyes off Ron and Harry, not wanting them to see the horror on her face.

He somehow knew about her dream, and was taunting her with it. Her face burned with embarrassment as she wondered how long he’d known about it. Was there a spell to see other people’s dreams? She parted ways with Ron and Harry as the two headed for the common room. She needed to do some research.

A/N: This chapter is pretty short, so for a Valentine's Day special, I'll be uploading two chapters today. But not together. :P The next one will be up in less that twelve hours.

Pinster: Thank you so much for the review!! I definitely understand about the synopsis. I couldn't find a good way to sum up how this story goes without spoiling it. The tags also feel inadequate to me, but I'm not sure how to tag "Long as hell with lots of sexual tension" or "Basically a romance novel, with familiar characters, and lots of smut." Hahaha.

Chapter 7: Dirty Little Secret

Hermione sat at dinner with her fellow Gryffindors, her research having turned up nothing, and her mind supplying no theories. She glanced up from her potatoes, toward the Slytherin table, searching for the taunting gaze she knew would be there.

He’d been looking away, but seemed to feel her gaze, turning his head to catch her staring, and

he lifted his eyebrows, his face turning up into a victorious smirk. She looked away, seething, and ashamed. Of all people, Malfoy had to know. Malfoy! He would humiliate her with it until she hexed him. At least it didn't seem like he'd told anyone else. That was the only thing she could think of that would be worse. And she didn't plan on letting him have a chance. She'd stop him from making fun of her, even if she had to wipe his memory.

"I'm going to go study." Hermione lied, dropping her fork to her plate, and leaving the table, having no appetite. Ron and Harry looked at her like she was crazy, but Ginny wished her luck sarcastically. She smiled at Ginny, hoping she didn't need it.

As soon as she was out of the Great Hall she slipped into the shadows, and snuck down to the dungeon, waiting for Malfoy and his nasty gang to pass. She hid in a storeroom, the door cracked for her to see who passed.

"Granger?" The voice caught her off guard, only a few minutes after she'd hidden, expecting to be down there long enough to formulate a plan on how to separate him from his goons. She held her breath, waiting for them to pass her hiding spot.

The door opened, and light from the hallway torches flooded in, silhouetting the slim figure that had opened it.

"Rubbish hiding spot, Granger." Malfoy said, sounding amused as he joined her in the closet, and closed the door behind her.

"Lumos seor!" She said, holding her wand out in front of her, as a light orb floated above them. As soon as he could see her, he moved forward, his arms trapping her against a shelf, his face swooping to hers.

Draco forgot everything he'd promised himself about waiting for her to come to him. She was here, alone with him, and he couldn't be bothered to play any more games. He took her face in both hands, and pressed his lips to hers, letting every ounce of lust show as he tangled his hands in her hair.

She tasted sweet, and warm, just like any other girl. She felt no different than a pureblood, her hands on his chest, a small barrier, but a weak one. She didn't seem to be resisting, but neither was she cooperating. She'd frozen, her whole body unmoving against his as he kissed her.

"Come on, Granger, I know just how you want it," Draco whispered, letting his mouth trail to her ear. "I can give you what Weasley never did."

"What's that?" She asked, her head spinning as his hands massaged the back of her neck, his lips playing with her earlobe.

"Pleasure. The kind you'd be too embarrassed to ask for," his teeth tugged at her ear, making her shiver. "Pleasure you're afraid will make someone hate you."

She felt her arms getting heavy, unwilling to hold him off. What exactly did he have in mind? She remembered some of the things dream-Draco had done to her. If it hadn't been a dream, she'd have been too embarrassed to do some of it. Was he offering that for real?

"Let me fuck you until you scream, Hermione." His vulgar words tugged at her stomach, making

her want to let him do just that, especially when his mouth was so good at playing with her neck. Ron had never even thought of kissing the area Malfoy was nuzzling, let alone treating it as though it was some secret weapon against her.

"I..." She floundered, trying to find any excuse to keep her dignity. "I don't want to be your bragging rights, Malfoy." She breathed, finding a small island of sanity. He pulled away, looking into her eyes. He looked more serious than she'd ever seen him.

"I can't ever brag about this, Granger," he said, his eyes burning into her. "You aren't a trophy lay. You're a dirty little secret," his words stung, until he spoke again, making her feel guilty. "Just like I am." He stared at her, as if waiting for some response to what he'd said. She didn't deny it.

"No one will know?" She asked, eyeing him warily, feeling her heart race as she considered actually acting out her fantasies.

"Not if you keep your mouth shut." His smirk was less mean than it ever had been, holding a note of humor as he tried half-heartedly to imitate his usual insensitive image.

"Like I'd tell anyone I'd shagged the most hateful boy in the whole school." She shot back, narrowing her eyebrows at him scornfully.

"Good, then." He said, looking instantly triumphant. He tilted his head towards her again, and she didn't stop him, meeting his lips as he descended, opening her mouth for him as he nibbled at her lower lip, and trailed his tongue after his teeth. His fingers found her waist, and he squeezed gently, massaging his way to her hips and down the sides of her thighs.

He slid her robes up, pulling them over her head swiftly, and exposing her gold underwear, which he appraised comfortably.

"Nice knickers, Granger." He muttered in surprise, completely sincere as he moved his lips back to hers, and his hands slid over her exposed skin. Goosebumps followed his fingers as they slid up her waist, and over her bra. He squeezed her breast with one hand, letting the other slide along the edge of her panties. There were bits of frill on the edges, amusing him as he slid a finger into the band, and teased her, running it back and forth along the line of her hip.

She enjoyed his warm hands, his demanding mouth, and his skillful touches. He was even better than in her dream, making her shiver, and feel inexperienced next to his efficacious progression. When his hand went between her thighs, she thought she'd combust, either from bashfulness, or pleasure. Her breathing picked up its pace as he rubbed her through the thin gold fabric, long fingers pressing into the heated, dampened space.

"So much better than the dream..." His words pulled at her mind, her curiosity soaring.

"How-" She panted, trying to focus through his touching. "How did you know bout that?"

He grinned down at her, gleeful that there was something he knew, and she didn't. "It was in the potions book, Granger. Right in the description." He kissed her, not truly answering her question, and distracting her completely.

"Mmm..." She moaned softly, enjoying how his pale fingers felt stroking her. She realized what

he'd meant about the dream. There had been no warmth, no true intimacy.

Draco's hands slid across her, both guided to the waistband of her underwear. He slid them down easily, exposing her to the dim light, and his own scrutiny. She looked down at the top of his head as he knelt to push the knickers off her feet. She felt self-conscious, as he looked from her knickers to her privates, leaning closer. His mouth was soft as it touched her skin, his tongue warm as it slid between the folds, his fingers swiftly joining his mouth, a single digit slowly entering her as he lapped at the most sensitive point. She gasped, grabbing one of the shelves behind her for support as he pleased her. He seemed entirely engrossed in the act, only looking up when she moaned and twitched. A soft noise caught her attention, growing slowly louder.

"Stop! Malfoy, stop!" She hissed, pulling him by his hair, away from her. "I hear people."

A/N: And I'll leave it on that hanging note for tonight. :D First real contact, people approaching... What EVER will happen next!? Tune back in tomorrow night to see!

Chapter 8: A Lesson in Begging

Malfoy stood, looking her up and down as he reached into his pocket and pulled out his wand.

"Colloportus!" He whispered, pointing his wand at the door, locking it, and turning back to her, leaning in to kiss her. She tasted herself on his lips, tangy, and sweet. His tongue delved into her mouth with the same passion it had had elsewhere. His hands pulled at her hair, tilting her head back, leaving her throat exposed to him. He kissed his way downward, keeping her head tilted uncomfortably, letting go of her hair only once he had reached her chest, and required his hands to pull her bra under her breasts. His mouth claimed one of her nipples, his fingers claiming the other. He bit gently, bringing a surprised hiss from her lips.

"Hush now, Granger, don't want someone to hear you..." He murmured, squeezing her breast, and flicking his tongue across her other nipple.

She pulled away from him, ignoring his puzzled look, and knelt on the floor, digging through her robes to find her wand. She pointed her wand at the door and whispered "Muffliato."

"No one can hear us, now." She said quietly, stuffing her wand back into the pocket of her discarded robe, and turning to face her blond rival. She looked up at him from her crouched position, licking her lips at the thought of returning his actions. She stayed on her knees, reached for his hips, and pulled him closer, so she could push his robes up. He pulled them swiftly over his head, dropping them with hers, standing in just his black silk boxers, unabashed as she pulled those, too, away from him. His erection fell easily into her hand, and she stared at it. It was the same as the dream, not her imagination filling in. She licked it gently, wrapping her lips around it, and letting her saliva coat it as she moved her mouth back and forth over it. His eyes closed, one hand rested in her hair, the other gripping the shelves for balance. She licked and sucked at him, teasing his erection with her mouth, looking up at him to see how her ministrations were affecting him. He looked enslaved, his face scrunched in the most honest expression Hermione had ever seen. His evident pleasure sent a thrill through her. He whispered something, too soft for her to hear, and she pulled away, looking up at him inquisitively.

"Sorry?" She said, prompting him to repeat, feeling self conscious as he opened his eyes.

"That's amazing," he groaned, looking down at her. She grinned up at him, glad that her experience with Ron counted for something. "For a-" He paused, their eyes holding, as he almost insulted her. "For a Gryffindor." He finally said, his eyes glittering with mischief.

"Oh really? What's something Slytherin girls don't do?" She asked, challenging, and ready to make him reel. She refused to be best only in grades.

"They don't beg." Draco said, thinking of Pansy's whiny voice demanding, some fifth year's awkward, endless questions, and some other girl's breathless silence as he made her cum repeatedly.

"Beg?" Hermione was suddenly unsure, the thought making her feel unclean.

"Yes. They don't ever beg." He said, stepping out of his boxers, and kneeling down to her level. He ran a hand from her waist to her shoulder, skimming her breast, and pushing her hair back. His hand reached around her back, and popped the clasp of her bra instantly, very unlike Ron's fumbling fingers that she'd had to help.

"I can't blame them." Hermione expressed, watching her own hand as it skimmed his bare chest. He was more muscular than she had expected him to be, the lines of his chest and stomach showing in the dim light.

"Like what you see, Granger?" Malfoy asked, repeating the dream they'd shared. She nodded unsure whether she preferred his slim muscles, or Ron's lanky build. Malfoy was shorter, and seemed scrawny, but without his robes on, he was defined, and well-proportioned, and still much taller than her.

Draco leaned over her, forcing her backward onto their robes, and flat against the floor as he leaned over her, supporting himself with one hand.

He touched her freely, watching his hand play across her skin, and his hard dick pressed into her thigh, throbbing as his fingers explored. They sank between her legs, and he watched her face as he played with her, enjoying her expressions, and the way she licked her bottom lip, unaware that she was doing it.

He moved between her legs, pressing his full erection against her, sliding it back and forth, teasing her further.

"Do you want me to fuck you, Granger?" He asked, looking into her face for a brief moment, before letting his head dip to her chest, taking the peak of her breast between his teeth again.

"Yes." She sounded breathless, just as needy as he felt.

"Beg for it." He kissed his way up her chest, and along her shoulder, scattering her thoughts easily.

"Please..." She sighed, her voice barely audible.

"You can do better." Malfoy admonished, rocking his hips provocatively against hers.

"Please fuck me..." She whimpered, moving her hips helplessly against his. He wasn't sure which of one them was more worked up at this point.

"Better," He rubbed a little lower, sliding the head of his cock across her opening. "Use my name."

"Please fuck me, Draco." She added, her face bright red under her light orb, her throat tightening around the words. He was going to tease her until she cracked.

"As hard as I like?" He seemed to be asking for more than just clarification. Hermione felt her face burning as she played his game, feeling him so close to entering her.

"Please..." She whimpered, all the tension from the past week burning inside her, making her pulse pound, and her mind fog with need.

He slid slowly in, enjoying the first penetration to its fullest, trying to memorize the feel, and maximize her torment. He stopped, barely inside her, purposefully giving her only a hint of what she wanted. Hermione whined beneath him, her hips squirming, and her hands gripping his shoulders.

"What do you need, Granger?" he asked, loving her embarrassed face, and the twinge of panic as he began slowly pulling out.

"Faster..." She mumbled, demanding, for such a bookworm.

"What's that?" He asked, grinning down at her.

"Fuck me harder, Draco! Please!" She whined, her fingernails biting into his shoulders. He captured her mouth with his, letting his tongue explore as he picked up a fast pace, appeasing her lust. Her eyes closed, and her face seemed to hold pure elation as he rocked back and forth, not yet rough, but fast enough to gratify her needy body.

As he got more into it, he let himself go a bit, thrusting harder, grabbing her hair, and biting more roughly at her neck. She moaned, her hips keeping pace with his, her hands disheveling his hair. He was surprised with how quickly she came, her back arching, and her body trembling as he pushed her over the edge, making her twitch around his dick, squeezing tightly onto him. She hadn't been nearly as hot, or tight in the dream, making him marvel at how she felt. He couldn't imagine why Weasley had ever given this up. He grinned at the thought of his red-headed enemy, leaving a hickey on her collarbone, and bite marks along her shoulder. She'd be remembering Draco for at least a week while they healed.

He watched her face as he made her cum again, shifting positions to angle straight into her sweet-spot. Her face was a lusty mask, her thoughts lost in the experience of him. He went as hard as he could, fast, and rough, letting his nails dig into her hips, the wet slapping noise from their coupling bodies hopefully stopping at the door. He lost himself in her, the scent of her hair, the feel of her wrapped around him, her mouth kissing desperately, and her hands pulling his hair roughly where she wanted him. She gave back everything he offered, never asking him to stop, or slow down.

“Hermione...” Her eyes fluttered open a centimeter as he whispered her name, slowing his thrusts, and leaning away from her kisses, to reach his hand down, forcing one last orgasm out of her, letting himself cum at the same time, her squeezing walls pulling every drop from him.

He collapsed next to her, both gasping for air, and covered in sweat. He closed his eyes, committing every detail of her to memory. He could just imagine this, next time he fucked Pansy, and never have to touch the mudblood again. She rolled away from him, pulling her underwear back on silently, and yanking her robes out from under him, without looking at him. She was still trembling, even as she got redressed, and pulled her wand out.

“Alohomora.” She said, pointing her wand at the door. She left, not looking back at the half-dressed Slytherin.

A/N: Finally with a climax.XD Pun intended. Sorryforthat, I usually hate puns...

Dedicated_Reader: Thank you for the review! I'm glad you're liking it so far, and hope I don't disappoint. Up until chapter 21 the story was pretty much writing itself, so I had the same feeling of anticipation to see what happened.

Everyone: It seems that the synopsis isn't a good fit for the story, and I'm trying to fix it to grab more interest. I've made a couple changes, so let me know what you think, or if you have any suggestions. I'm seriously considering changing it to "Just read the first chapter". >.<

Chapter 9: Bruises and Guilt

Hermione hurried to the Prefect's bathroom, locking the door behind her in the blissfully empty room. She sank to the ground next to the giant tub, and turned on her favorite faucet, shaking uncontrollably as the bath filled. She pulled off her robes, and stood in front of the mirror, looking at her naked body. The sweat had dried on her way up the stairs, but she noticed the hickies and bite marks along her shoulder and collar. It had really happened. She hadn't looked at him as she'd left, not wanting to see his usual smirk, or hear some mean mudblood comment. It had been the best sex she could imagine, and she hadn't wanted to spoil it by hexing Malfoy.

She slid into the tub, turning off the water before it got too high. She didn't trust her muscles entirely just yet, and wasn't keen on drowning. She waded through the water, letting it soak her hair, and calm her muscles. Her privates were a bit sore, and remembering the begging made her pride sting. Other than that, Malfoy had been... great. Better than she'd thought possible. He really did outshoot Ron by miles, doing things the redhead had never even contemplated. She hadn't expected him to last quite so long, and the clock ticking away on the wall told her they'd been in the closet over an hour. Curfew was close, and as she dried off, she knew she'd be running back to the Gryffindor common room. She let the towel soak up the water from her mass of hair, while she pulled her clothes on. She shoved her knickers in her pocket, unwilling to put the soiled garment back on.

She hurried to her common room, and straight into her dormitory, avoiding the possible questions, or conversations. She was still too dazed to talk to her friends. She needed time to process what had happened.

She'd shagged Malfoy. That first thought made her giggle uncomfortably as she changed in her

empty dormitory, putting her bed clothes on, and donning a fresh pair of panties.

He was good. The second thought made her blush, and flop onto her bed, closing her eyes tightly, and trying to remember everything he'd done. She felt almost sorry for Ron, remembering how he'd fumbled, gone too fast, and seemed to have no concept of the female orgasm. For everything wrong with Malfoy, he was actually a thoughtful sexual partner. She squealed into her pillow, muffling the sound as she realized she had no idea how many times he'd made her cum.

She couldn't tell anyone. The third thought sobered her a bit, making her realize that everything she'd discovered, she would be keeping to herself. Even Ginny would likely gag if she told her friend about her tryst with the pugnacious Slytherin. No one else would know he'd kissed her, touched her, or complimented her. He'd acted as though she were just another girl, for once giving no thought to her parentage. He'd seemed like just another perverted teenager, unconcerned with petty things. It had been a glimpse into a Malfoy she could almost respect.

Draco lay on his bed, his mind spinning, but one thing solid, and firm in the center.

"A mudblood..." He felt disgusted with himself, especially after finding a letter from his parents once he got back to his dormitory. He couldn't read their words with her taint still on him. It felt like a betrayal, some sort of lie. Even after he had washed and read their letter, he couldn't formulate a reply. Anything he wrote felt like lies, every thought was guilt.

"Of all the girls to be that good, it HAD to be her." He rolled over, burying his face in his pillow, and letting out a long groan.

"Something wrong, Draco?" It was Goyle, just come out of the lavatory from his own bath.

"No." He replied, flopping to his back, and staring at the canopy of his bed. "If she'd been terrible, I could just forget it, and move on." He closed his eyes, remembering her face as he initially slid in. Pleasure, and frustration, all at once. Enjoyment, but not enough. He wondered if now, she felt satisfied. She'd left suddenly, saying nothing to him as he dressed. She hadn't even looked at him. He felt a pang of regret, for having such great sex, only for it to end so coldly, and abruptly. What could he expect though? It'd been a one-off thing, and she'd probably felt there was no need to speak to him after she got what she wanted.

Part of him wanted it to happen again. Another part was horrified it had happened at all. He could never tell anyone what he'd done. It was his little secret. His and Granger's. He would try to pretend it never happened. As his roommates shuffled in, getting ready for bed, he fell easily asleep, promising himself he'd satisfy himself with only Purebloods and half-bloods from here on.

A/N: So... for the synopsis, if no one's noticed yet, the second part is comprised of chapter titles...

Chapter 10: No Names

Draco sat at breakfast, glaring at his toast, as he spread marmalade across it angrily, trying to put his dream from his mind. It'd been even worse than what had actually happened. He'd been

shagging Granger, and his parents walked in. Pandemonium had ensued, all while he was starkers, people yelling, throwing insults, and pulling wands.

He felt as though he might as well have stayed up all night, for all the rest he got. He couldn't look at Granger, for fear of seeing the same hatred she'd had in the dream. He couldn't join his friends' conversations, having no energy to even tease passing first years.

"Draco, Granger's looking at you." Goyle's whispered voice had his head whipping up, looking toward Gryffindor table. She had her face buried in a book, one arm poised just beyond it, fork in hand, food going cold as she read. She was still on the book he'd recommended, which made his heart pound to see her reading. He glared over at Goyle's smirking face.

"She's got her nose buried in a book, Goyle." He said, as though speaking to a six-year-old.

"But you looked." He seemed amused, teasing his friend. Malfoy ignored him, taking a bite of his toast, and wondering if he could convince Madam Pomfrey to give him some sleeping draught.

"You were saying her name in your sleep. Except not 'Granger'. You said 'Hermione'." Goyle seemed all too willing to rib Draco into hexing him.

"Maybe I was dreaming about hexing her." He waved it off, hoping Goyle dropped it. He seemed content for the moment with that answer and went back to his porridge, as Draco continued chewing his toast, keeping his eyes firmly at his own table.

Hermione went through her classes in a haze of notes, and homework, her mind only half-focused on her studies as she tried to forget the previous night. "It didn't even happen." She kept telling herself, trying to convince herself that it hadn't been nearly as good as she'd thought, all the tension and frustration making it seem better than it could have been.

She found herself dying to tell someone, mostly Ginny. But she kept her mouth closed tightly, only answering direct questions that were put to her. Her brain was buzzing with the details of his chest, the way he moved, the way he tasted. She'd managed to hide the bruises from her roommates, dressing too quickly for them to get a good look at the marks. Both Parvati and Lavender had complimented her cute new knickers, and she didn't want to give them something else to ask about.

"You seem kinda out of it Hermione." Ginny prodded her after three days of her zombie-like responses, cornering her in the common room Thursday evening.

"I'm fine. Just thinking a bit." It wasn't a lie. Her chest burned with the need to tell Ginny what had happened.

"You're not. You've been pretending to read that same book all week. You should've finished it days ago." Ginny was too perceptive. Hermione sighed, and tried, unsuccessfully, to push the image of tousled platinum hair from her mind. What if she told Ginny, without telling her?

"I... Can't talk about it here." Hermione said, eyeing the other Gryffindors surrounding them. Ron and Harry were only a few feet away, playing wizard's chess.

"I could take a trip to the dormitory." Ginny replied easily, grinning, and standing immediately. Hermione stood, and made her way to the stairs, followed by Ginny as she made her way to the

room. Lavender had been sitting on Ron when they'd left, and Parvati had been doing homework, so the room was empty.

"Muffliato." Hermione muttered after locking the door, and sat next to Ginny on her own bed.

"That bad?" Ginny asked, eyeing the locked door, and noting Hermione's spell.

"Well... I'm not sure," Hermione hedged, deciding not to mention Malfoy in any way, other than an abstract boy. "I... was with a boy the other night..."

"Who?" Ginny asked immediately, making Hermione cringe.

"I can't say," she replied, feeling low for withholding information. "But it's better for everyone if he stays unnamed." Ginny nodded, accepting the answer.

"Was he good?" She asked, making Hermione grin.

"The best," she answered honestly, letting it come back to her, full force. "He was sexy, and knew what he was doing." She said, making a face, thinking of how easily he'd gone down on her, and stroked her to orgasm.

"Ooh." She had Ginny's total attention.

"I honestly can't imagine better sex." Hermione blushed, thinking of how he'd made her thoughts disappear, leaving only the feel and taste of him. With him, it'd been a whole other game.

"That's good!" Ginny said, clapping her on the arm.

"That's what I'm not so sure about," Hermione said, feeling morose. "It was a fluke. It's never going to happen again, and I'm not sure how I feel about that. On the one hand, the sex was terrific, on the other..."

"You can't even tell me who it was..." Ginny filled in, her face falling. "I can see your dilemma."

"Yeah. I liked it, but... I've been worried all week about anyone finding out." Hermione fell backward, her head bouncing on her bed as she lay down.

"Jeez. It wasn't Ron, was it?" Ginny asked, knowing about their previous encounters. Hermione had snuck out of Ginny's room at the Burrow a few times to have them over summer break.

"No. And that somehow makes me feel even worse!" She exclaimed, closing her eyes.

"Especially because he outshined Ron in every way, once the kissing started."

"That's harsh." Ginny laughed, seeming to find her brother's inadequacy funny.

"I'm serious, Ginny, I may be going mad over this," Hermione whined, feeling very unlike

herself. "I can't even concentrate on reading, or studying. All I can think about is what I'm going to do about him."

"Well, can't you just ask him for another go?" Ginny said, sagely. "If he's just as good the

second time, you may want to worry, then.”

“What? Why?” Hermione looked at her friend, confused.

“Because any guy who’s that perfect in bed, has GOT to be your imagination,” Ginny said easily, shrugging. “He can’t keep up that kind of performance all the time, can he?” Hermione laughed at Ginny’s reasoning, imagining walking up to Malfoy and ‘asking him for another go’.

“I’ll think about that.” She promised, and the two girls fell into an amused silence.

Chapter 11: Going 'Round Again

Hermione managed to focus through most of Monday, her mind made up, and just waiting for the opportunity to act. During potions class, she stared into her swirling potion, trying to think of ways to get a message to Malfoy. She finally settled on a small piece of paper, scribbling a note onto it, and pointing her wand at it. She muttered under her breath making the paper vanish.

Draco looked at his book, checking the next ingredient before adding it.

“Same closet...” He paused, his brain registering the words, his hand poised over the bubbling cauldron. He shifted the paper to the side, reading the words underneath, and letting his fingers tip the corresponding elements into the water. He looked back down at the paper that had appeared in his textbook.

“Same closet after class, H.” He looked around at Granger, who was diligently stirring her own potion, reading her textbook, and counting silently to herself, her lips moving with each number. Her eyes flashed briefly to him, and away, confirming what he already knew.

He felt his stomach sink as he re-read the note. Would it be worse to go, or skip out, leaving her waiting. He finished his potion swiftly, and pointed his wand at the paper, erasing the words, and replacing it with two letters before making it vanish.

Hermione took longer than usual, cleaning up her supplies as class was dismissed.

“You two go along, I’ll probably just go to the library, or have a bath before dinner.” She told Ron and Harry, who were watching her clean up.

“See you at dinner, then.” Harry replied, slinging his bag over his shoulder, and leaving, cradling the damn potions book like it was his baby.

“Have fun at the library.” Ron said sarcastically. She rolled her eyes at him, hurrying him along as she finished clearing her potions supplies, and waved her wand over her cauldron, making the remaining potion inside vanish.

She left the now-empty room, and snuck around the corner, to the same closet her and Draco had shared a week ago. She clutched the scrap of paper that had ‘ok’ written on it, waiting in the dark closet for the Slytherin to appear. “Shouldn’t he be here already?” She thought to herself, having seen him leave before her. She was starting to feel dismayed, when suddenly the door

creaked open, the tall silhouette haloed by a platinum crown of hair.

"I was worried you wouldn't show up." She said, his appearance relieving her into honesty.

"I thought about it." He said, sending up an orb of light to float by the ceiling, and locking the door with another flick of his wand as they were doused in a dull orange twilight. She was surprised by his candor, unused to his neutral tone.

"Did you need help with your homework, Granger?" He asked, slightly more hostile, looking down at her with a strange expression she couldn't decipher, as if he'd realized he was being too friendly, and decided to act his normal bullying self.

"No, I wanted to ask..." She paused, Ginny's words stuck in her head. There had to be a better way of saying it? She looked warily toward the door, and muttered Harry and Ron's new favorite silencing spell. "Are you interested in another go?" She cringed, hearing the words take just the form she hadn't wanted them to. He stared, seeming like he hadn't heard her properly.

"Another go?" He asked and she could hear the derision in his voice. "Why would I want that? You were fun once, but I'd rather not sully myself twice." His face was emotionless as he said it, his dark words clashing with his eyes. They were locked on hers, challenging her to change his mind.

"Fine." She broke his gaze, and pushed around him, pulling out her wand to unlock the door, and hurry into the hallway, tears pricking her eyes. She'd thought maybe in private he wouldn't insult her like his usual ass of a self.

"Guess I was wrong. Nothing's changed. He got what he wanted." She thought, hurrying up the corridor.

Draco stood in the closet, feeling sleazy, and guilty, not satisfied by insulting her like he usually did. He'd seen the tears in her eyes, the pain on her face. She'd come onto him, and he'd blown her off. What kind of a brainless prat was he?

He burst out of the closet, seeing a surprised first year freeze halfway up the corridor. He darted around the corner, quickly catching up to the retreating bushy mass of curls.

"Wait." He called, reaching out to take her wrist. She was a smart girl; if he explained, maybe she'd understand. She yanked her arm away, and spun to face him.

"Don't touch me, Malfoy." She threatened, her eyes promising retribution. He scrambled for words, hearing the footsteps of the first-year cutting into his time to speak.

"In here." He grabbed her arm, and guided her toward a door, opening it, and hiding both of them inside, away from prying eyes, and ears. He could have all the time he needed to try making sense.

"Let me out, Malfoy, or I'll jinx you." Her voice was completely steady as she spoke, all traces of pain gone, replaced with pure fury.

"I can't." He said, feeling his own confusion at the situation swirling around his mind. Why had he stopped her? It was best if she hated him. Best if they kept it as a single instance.

"I mean it Malfoy, let me out. She'd pulled her wand on him, pointing the tip straight at his heart. He stared at her wand, remembering how her fist had felt against his face, three years ago. He knew she wouldn't hesitate to hurt him, especially here, with no witnesses.

"If you want to run away so badly, fine!" He stepped aside, feeling his own anger rising, angry with her for threatening him, and angry with himself for thinking she may have understood anything about him.

"Thank you." She shot at him angrily, swinging the door open, and disappearing around it.

"Run back to the Weasel, Mudblood! Maybe he'll make you feel a quarter of what I did, if he ever takes you back!" He shouted after her, feeling hatred in his gut. She was probably going to seek her friends' comfort, and make him out to be the bad guy. He had no one to talk to. No one he could tell how he felt. No one who could tell him what he was feeling.

He pulled out his wand, waving it at the door, forcing the door closed violently, and sinking to the floor, feeling his chest heave with rapid breaths, his face felt hot, his eyes stung, and his whole midsection felt as though it had been crushed.

Misery. That's what he was feeling. He hated himself for ever touching that filthy mudblood. He hated his friends for being unable to listen. He hated the Weasel for exchanging her, giving her an opportunity at himself. He hated Slughorn for encouraging it, and he hated Hermione for being a better witch, a perfect lay, and a god-damned mudblood. He felt like his soul was caving in as he sat there, sobbing into his knees like a first year, his voice filling the room, even as he tried to enunciate Hermione's silencing charm through his tears.

He hated himself for being Pureblood. He hated himself for being a Malfoy.

He couldn't keep his mouth shut, could he? He had to antagonize her. He just had to bring her as low as he felt about himself. He hit the floor, his knuckles colliding with hard stone. His hand spiking with pain, his chest hurt worse still. Since hurting himself seemed to be all he could do, why not keep going, until there was nothing left of himself? There'd be nothing left to hate.

A/N: Bit sorry for the angst here, but not really. Angsty Draco is a bit of a guilty pleasure for me to write. :3 Lemme know what you think of how it's coming along! Please let me know if you see any errors, or not-well-thought-out bits that could use touching up.

Chapter 12: Tears, Fears, and the Unknown

Hermione sat on her bed, tears spilling out of her eyes, her face buried in her pillow.

"Hermione? Are you in there?" Ginny was knocking at the door, pushing it slowly open to peek inside. "You missed dinner," She said, moving into the room, and closing the door behind her. "Oh no. What happened?" Ginny's voice was instantly worried, taking in her crying friend, grabbing a box of tissues, and sitting on her bed, rubbing her back.

"He... He said he didn't want to sully himself." Hermione shot angrily, his face playing across her memory. Ginny stared, stunned, her hand frozen in place with a tissue.

"He knows about Ron, and said..." She choked, her words cutting off as a fresh wave of tears rolled down her face. "He said- to run back, and hope- that he would take me back..."

"You asked him for another go, and he insulted you?" Ginny seemed bewildered, unbelieving that anyone could be so thick. Hermione nodded, and wiped her face with the tissue, quickly needing a second, as the tears kept falling.

"I threatened to jinx him..." She said, smiling wanly at her friend, feeling equal parts proud of her small retaliation, and horrible for threatening him, when he looked so confused, and equally hurt by his own words.

"That's good. Too bad you didn't actually jinx him." Ginny mused, handing her friend a wad of tissues.

"He looked too scared. He only said the thing about Ron after I left..." She added, feeling a fresh wave of horror at his words. The worst part had been their accuracy. "I think... I actually hurt his feelings." The thought of Malfoy actually being insulted was too hard to believe.

"Still, he shouldn't have said anything. He should have been a bloody gentleman." Ginny admonished, making a face.

"I spose I was expecting too much from someone like him." She sighed. Just having her friend there made her feel loads better, knowing not everyone hated her like he did.

"A polite conversation is never too much to expect." Ginny sounded as though she was quoting someone, and Hermione wondered if it was a professor, or Mrs. Weasley.

"I suppose I'm just as guilty, then, threatening to jinx him when he tried to make up. At least, I think that's why he followed me..." Hermione was just as confused by his fresh insults as his coming after her.

"Do you think he'll apologize?" Ginny asked hopefully.

"No. It's not like him at all." Hermione replied, wondering if he'd been about to apologize before she threatened to curse him. Had she mucked it up, or had he? Ginny handed her another tissue, and tilted her head thoughtfully.

"Do you want to make up, or let it be?" Ginny asked, trying to tuck a strand of Hermione's hair behind her ear, unsuccessfully.

"I don't know. I feel awful for cutting him off like that, but... He deserved it." Hermione reflected, examining her own feelings.

"Well, think about being the first to apologize, especially if it'll make you feel better." Ginny seemed wise as she spoke, and Hermione wondered if she'd be saying the same, if she knew it was Malfoy.

"Thank you, Ginny." Hermione said, knowing that if anyone apologized, it would have to be her. Malfoy probably wasn't sorry for what he'd said, only that he'd passed up an opportunity to humiliate her, with permission again.

"Not a problem, 'Mione." Ginny replied, and handed her friend more tissues.

Draco followed his classmates down to the small hut near the edge of the forest, wondering what tortures they'd be put through today. Only part of him cared. The other part was trying not to think of... her. He'd kept his eyes off of her during meals, avoided her in hallways, not wanting a reminder of his own worthlessness. He wasn't sure if he was more upset over pushing away a perfect sexual partner, or how low he'd felt doing it.

He kept his eyes on his friends, and the ground as they made their way to Hagrid's hut for class, the Gryffindors walking ahead of them, the bushy brown mass of hair threatening to draw his attention.

He thought about apologizing, but she'd probably hex him for getting close enough to try. She'd made it clear she wanted nothing further to do with him. He'd oblige her, giving her some small regard.

He paid no attention to the class happening around him, taking mechanical care of the monster he was forced to walk on a leash, as though it were a pet.

A small, familiar gasp drew his gaze, pulling him from his quagmire of thoughts, only to be thrown into the waiting jaws of torment.

"Your hand." Granger said, her eyes caught on the bruised, scabbing fist that clutched the rope. He glanced at the evidence of his breakdown, and flipped his arm, hiding the marks from sight. Her mutation had dragged her away from her friends, regardless of how she pulled at her own rope, it tugged her along, right past where he stood with his seemingly lazy charge. He looked away, staring down at his disgusting, clawed creature, unwilling to throw his usual insults her way. She seemed to struggle an inch closer, staring down at her pale almost-crab, as though it was leading her closer to him on it's own. He moved away, putting his own critter between them, and tugging at the rope, as though he could encourage it to move away from her. It stayed put as she inched closer, giving his scuttling monster a wide berth.

"Wait!" She hissed under her breath as he stepped away again, trying to keep his snapping ward between them. He looked up meeting her gaze, her brown eyes probing his as she struggled closer, glancing around to see if anyone had noticed her approach.

"Can I help you, Granger?" He asked, keeping his tone flat, hoping she hadn't come over just to get him back for his comment to her fleeing back.

"Same time, same place." She muttered, her face just as cool as his expression, giving none of her thoughts away, as her crab dragged her past him, and back into a few Gryffindors.

His chest throbbed as she said it, and he thought again, of not showing up. If she was going to take the opportunity to hex him, he'd rather not chance it. But if she just wanted to throw some insults at him, to repay him for what he'd said, it couldn't be too bad.

As he made his way back up to the castle with his fellow Slytherins, he still hadn't made up his mind, eyeing the closet as he passed it to get to his common room. She wasn't there yet, since they'd been the first down the hallway. He had time to drop his bag off in his dormitory before deciding whether to chance a jinx-happy witch.

He splashed water on his face, trying to calm his spinning mind. His thoughts were swirling too fast for him to make a solid decision. As he dried his face, he wondered how long she would wait. That thought made up his mind. He snuck across the common room, and out into the corridor, avoiding his friends easily. He turned the corner to the closet's corridor, just in time to see a brown mass of hair disappearing around the far corner. He ran to catch up, his feet pounding noisily on the stone floors. He skidded around the corner, his breath coming in fast pants as he caught up to her.

"Wait!" He gasped, feeling the sprint burning in his legs. "Sorry I'm late." He said, gasping for air. Hermione eyed him, and looked up and down the hallway, grabbing his wrist, and pulling him into the same classroom she had run from last time.

He closed his eyes, his heart pounding in his chest as he tried to slow his breathing, the mixture of fear, and running making his heart go double-time. He felt cool fingers on his hand, and looked up, realizing his hand was in hers, and she'd pulled her wand out. He tried to pull it away, his face burning as she inspected his bruised, cracked knuckles.

"What happened?" She asked, sounding worried, and keeping his hand firmly in hers as she prodded it with her wand. "Why didn't you go to Madam Pomfrey?" He looked guiltily to the floor, still splattered with his dried blood, where he'd hit it repeatedly.

"I did it on purpose." He admitted, watching as the bruises faded under her wand. Was there anything she couldn't do?

"On purpose?" She dropped his hand, the bruising gone, and the cuts smaller than they had been.

"Yes. I was feeling... Overwhelmed." He said, keeping his eyes on the floor, and his tone civil as he remembered the crushing feeling of his own ego collapsing on top of him.

"I'm sorry." It was a whisper, and she wouldn't meet his eyes either, but it made his heart leap back into overdrive. He stared at her, not believing that she of all people, was apologizing to him.

"What for?" He asked, lifting his hand to brush his hair back into place.

"For threatening to jinx you." She said, looking up, and giving him a small smile.

"Don't." His voice was too shaky. He took a deep breath, and tried to articulate what he'd wanted to tell her when he pulled her into this classroom.

"I enjoyed the sex," he started, feeling like it was a dumb place to start. "But I don't think it can happen again. Too many of my friends, and my whole family, would be disgusted by me if they found out," he held her steady gaze, hating how her eyebrows were drawing together, her lips pressing into a thin line. "I'm torn, Granger. It was great, and I can't stop thinking about it, but... I feel guilty all the time, I don't feel like I can face my parents, and I know I can't face what it's made me feel. I hate myself, Granger." He added, hoping she would understand. She stood silent, frozen by what he'd said, her wand dangling limply by her side. Her expression was confusion, warring with hurt. She didn't understand. He sighed, and let his eyes drop to the floor, turning away, reaching for the door. At least he felt a tiny bit better, having said the words

aloud.

"I didn't know..." Hermione's voice was quiet, stopping his hand on the knob. She said nothing else, and he didn't move, his guilt, warring with his obsession. Would one more time be okay? Could he stop with just once more?

"Draco..." He turned, his name sounding all-too emotional in her voice. "I'm sorry." She was staring into his grey eyes, tears sparkling on her lashes. She was crying. For him.

His fingers fell off the knob, and he moved to her, his arms wrapping around her, his heart lurching with warmth. No one had cried for him that he could ever remember. Why was one mudblood more caring than a lifetime of purebloods? He'd been raised to hate them. Raised to believe they were inferior. This witch was ruining everything he thought he knew.

He squeezed her, letting his gratitude seep through his arms, into her, anchoring himself amidst his confusion.

"It's not your fault," he heard himself reassure her, thinking of his parents with a new lens. "It's mine..."

Her arms were around his waist, keeping him steady as he let his worldview shift, the warmth of the girl in his arms making his mind reel, and his body respond, his heart pounding, and his dick twitching. He wasn't ready for anyone to find out he'd slept with her, but having her here, in his arms, he felt like he could easily do it again, and damn the consequences.

A/N: *cackles evilly* How 'bout that suspense? >:)

These chapters looked much longer in my google drive.....o.o

loveinthemadness: I'm happy to know I have an entertained audience! I'm happy you like the angst, as I definitely love writing it. I usually update later at night, since that's when I'm awake, but I think I missed a day earlier this week.....ohwell,StillLotsOfChaptersToGo. Thank you so much for the review!

Chapter 13: Losing Control

A/N: Thanks so much to my editor the amazing Final Kitty (not on AFF) for working so hard with me to get the phrasing and intentions within this chapter just right. Still working out a few differences in opinion, so I might edit it later, but for now, please enjoy!

Hermione felt his arms around her, surprising her. It felt almost friendly, his face buried in her hair, his hand on her back. She wrapped her hands around his waist, comforting him.

"Comforting Malfoy?" It was surreal, the things he had said made perfect sense, but she'd never imagined him to actually feel so much. He'd been raised to hate her, and because he didn't, he hated himself. He thought something was wrong with him, because he thought of her as something other than a lesser creature.

"There's nothing wrong with you, Malfoy." She said, returning his reassurance, feeling strange hugging her best friends' worst enemy. Thinking of him as an actual person with emotions was hard to accept. Part of her was worried he was going to pull away and laugh scornfully, making fun of her for having feelings, proving for good that he was heartless.

She wasn't expecting him to kiss her again, but he did. Tilting her head back and taking her lips with his warm mouth, he pulled her closer, pressing his body flush with hers, letting his hands travel to her lower back. His lips were rough against her own, scabbed from nervous biting. Gentle hands stroked her back, his voice soft as he whispered against her mouth.

"There's nothing wrong with you, either." Her heart was racing, his words countering every insult he'd thrown at her. She felt silly for how happy that simple phrase made her, how childishly hopeful that maybe he could change and never tease her again. She let him guide her to a desk, and lift her easily on top of it. Judging by the bulge pressing into her, his mind was going to the exact same place as hers.

"The door!" She gasped, finally freed from his lips, worry clouding her mind. He pulled one hand away, drawing his wand and aiming it at the door behind him.

"Colloportus..." He muttered, his face burying itself in her neck. She heard the lock click into place and Draco mutter the silencing spell from her collarbone before shoving his wand back in his pocket and setting his hand on her again.

He wasted no time teasing her this time, instead pulling her robe swiftly over her head, followed by her bra and his own robe, all convening on the floor in a pile. She wrapped her arms around his bare shoulders, easily accepting this encounter with Draco as real. The dungeon classroom had no windows, but the torches surrounding the room were lit, giving bare skin an amber glow as they tangled together.

Hermione wrapped her legs around his slim hips, pulling him against her in an intimate way. His hands grasped and pinched her breasts, making her gasp and flinch. She enjoyed the sensation but was shocked every time he gave a little twist to her nipple, or his teeth sank into her skin a little harder than anticipated.

"Draco..." She murmured, abandoning any pretense of formality or enmity. Nothing about the way he was rubbing against, biting, or touching her implied he cared who her parents were or what house she was in. He had let himself go, doing whatever he wanted with her willing body, and making her enjoy every caress and nip.

"Hermione, I need you..." He growled, his voice husky, holding onto a single, last shred of self-control – for her.

"Draco, please..." Hermione moaned, the feel of him through his boxers driving her mad with desire. She watched his restraint depart, fingers gripping tighter, teeth biting harder. He jerked her knickers from her hips in a single swipe and shoved them down her legs, lifting her out of the way with ease. She kicked her shoes off, hearing them thump to the floor, leaving her in only her knee-high stockings and desire-flushed skin, vulnerable to his scrutiny, and too lost in wanton weakness to care. His own boxers, socks, and shoes were quickly discarded, leaving his erection bobbing in the open air, free to take every liberty with her.

He pulled her to the very edge of the desk, and slicking his fingers over her opening, crouching down to taste her, making her groan and grab at his hair in an attempt to anchor herself. A sharp sting joined the pleasure, and her eyes shot open, just in time to witness him leave a matching bite mark on her opposite thigh. His fingers massaged her the whole time, turning the stinging bites into something good – and darkly enjoyable. His eyes roamed up her as his tongue delved deep into her sweet sex, making her squirm and look avert her eyes.

“Look at me, Granger.” His words were clear as his fingers slid right inside her, his voice returning her eyes instantly back to his. She could feel her face burning as he watched her react to his fingers and tongue. He made her squirm until she started to tense, just a few strokes from orgasm.

“Don’t stop...” Hermione moaned, her hands holding his head in place. His fingers twisted inside her and he kept his tongue steady as she clutched his hair feverishly, hunching forward as he made her climax.

Her voice hitched as she writhed above him, her hips tilted and her toes curled inside her socks. She hoisted him up, roughly by his hair, kissing him breathlessly, lost in her own passion.

Draco pressed his erection against her opening as she kissed him, delighting in her responsive whimpers as he slowly filled her, swallowing every noise she made with his lips over hers. Making her cum had been entertaining, and he had felt elated watching her face twitch and contort as he pushed her over the edge. He couldn’t think as he thrust into her, her nails digging into his back, his teeth biting the tender flesh of her lip. She was moaning freely, frantically, her voice driving him crazy, his hands gripping her hips to keep her in place as he beat into her, relentless and greedy.

“Dra-co...” She panted his name, earning her a sharp nip to her neck. His breathing was fast, rhythmic, matching the pace of his hips. She was rocking against him, using her hold on his shoulders as leverage to move herself. The desk was scooting slowly across the floor, scraping noisily against the stones with every thrust.

He grasped her rump tighter, tilting back to cradle her against him. She was lighter than he’d imagined, gripping onto him with a squeal of worry as he carried her the few steps to the wall. He pressed her back against the cool stone building, making her shiver and jerk at the sudden shock, her chest pressing into his. He trapped her hips against the stones, bracing them both right next to the door. He picked up where he’d left off, burying his face in her neck to deliver a few bites as he thrust roughly into her. She growled, and he felt her teeth on his shoulder, biting him back, and letting one hand tug at his hair.

He could feel her orgasm rippling through her whole body as he pressed his entire torso to hers, her mouth left open as a satiated moan escaped supple lips. He came shortly afterwards, unable to resist her contracting muscles’ bliss. He shakily sank to the ground, letting her slide down the wall to rest in his arms as they regained their breath and dignity.

“That was amazing...” She panted, her forehead resting against his shoulder, her heated breath sweeping past his collarbone.

“I’m not done yet, just resting...” He teased, squeezing her close and lying back into the pile of robes, taking her with him. She wasn’t going to escape so easily this time; he was determined to keep her against him until he’d at least caught his breath.

"Can you even manage that again?" Hermione sounded incredulous, and he rolled his head to face her.

"Once I catch my breath, sure." He said, grinning mischievously at her.

She grinned back, leaning up on her elbow. Draco squeezed her tightly as she lifted herself up.

"You're not running away this time, Granger." He intoned, his eyes holding every ounce of possessiveness he would ever deny.

"No, I'm not," she agreed, reaching underneath her to pull his wand from a robe. "Your wand was poking me."

"My wand has been poking you for the past twenty minutes." He quipped, earning him a glare. He laughed, enjoying teasing her like this, his previous, distressing thoughts mended by her, his worries put on hold.

Hermione glared at him, his joke bawdy and callous. She refused to admit it was fairly accurate and a bit funny. His laughter was innocent, free of derision and aggression. His face when he laughed was beautiful. Her breath caught in her throat as she watched his eyes gleam with real humor, his mouth open in a pure, energetic smile.

"You're much more attractive when you're being nice..." She observed, realizing she'd never seen him smile or laugh like this before. Did he only show this side of himself to his friends? Were they friends now? He'd said he doubted this would happen again and proved himself almost instantly wrong. He seemed to have forgotten his previous desolate apprehensions, or at least decided to put them aside. She found his quick jump in emotions a bit dizzying, but found it easy in that moment to understand how he felt. His honest smile was rendering her own worries far-off, impossible to care about just then.

"You're more attractive without your nose buried in a book." He teased, his smile fading a bit, but remaining sincere and warm.

"Thanks so much." She said sarcastically, dropping the wand to his other side and giving him a reproachful look.

"All right then. The books are attractive too." He compromised teasingly, his playful grin spreading across his face, his fingers tickling her side as he slid them down to her thigh. She wasn't sure how to react to this newly opened side of him, so she diverted her attention from his face, hiding her own petite smile. She let her gaze fall down his stomach, looking at his flaccid member. It was half the size and wrinkly, but as she stared at it, it twitched, filling in slightly.

"Care to see how long you last, Granger?" He challenged, his face holding more than just a spark of lust. He rolled on top of her before she could answer, kissing away her thoughts and leaving only him in her mind.

Chapter 14: Comparing Notes, Boys, and Friends

Hermione walked into the common room, arms full of books she'd just picked up from the

library, bag slung over her shoulder, feeling equal parts naughty and elated. She'd spent way too long in the dungeon with Draco, nearly missing dinner, and had to think of an excuse for where she had been.

"How did Weasley ever keep up with you?" Draco had drawled after two hours of what had felt like him forcing her to cum, over and over again, only climaxing twice more himself.

"He didn't." She had admitted, feeling satisfied and sore, her ass stinging where he had spanked her, her clit feeling super sensitive, and her body aching from some of the positions he'd taken her in.

"Hermione!" Ginny was hurrying towards her from a chair by the fireplace, a look of determination in her eyes. "Can you look over my homework for me, pleeeeeease?" She said, holding up a roll of parchment.

"Sure, let me set all of this in my dormitory, and I'll help you out." She said, unable to deny her best friend anything right then.

"I'll help you carry." Ginny offered, taking some of the books from Hermione and following her up the stairs.

She set the books in a teetering pile on her bedside table, helping Ginny with her load of literature.

"What subject is the homework?" She asked, eyeing her pile of books warily, hoping they wouldn't fall.

"I lied about the homework, I just wanted an excuse to follow you up," she grinned wickedly at her older friend, flopping on her bed and getting comfy. "Tell me everything!" She said, sounding rather girlish as she smirked and watched Hermione. "Of course she didn't buy my excuse, she's not as thick as those two." Hermione thought silently, letting her grin spread wide, thinking of what she'd done.

"We made up." She said happily, hoping Malfoy stayed civil.

"That's great!" Ginny exclaimed, bouncing lightly as Hermione sat next to her. "What happened exactly?" She prompted, her eyes gleaming with triumph for her mate.

"I did what you suggested and apologized first," Hermione said, to a nod from her friend. "And then he just... opened up. Started telling me how he felt, about the sex, about himself, the whole thing." Ginny was listening intently, not interrupting as Hermione recounted her afternoon.

"But then, things got... heated." She explained, grinning and remembering how easily she'd used his given name, moaned it.

"Was it just as good as the first time?" Ginny asked, finally cutting in.

"Better. It was shorter, but then we went again. For an hour and a half." Hermione said, bewildered that she'd spent two hours of her afternoon with Draco Malfoy, and would do it again in a heartbeat. "I swear, Ginny, he got better, not worse." Hermione alleged, wondering how he'd even managed to come up with some of the things he'd done to her. Some had been

humiliating, others blissful, but she had enjoyed every minute of it.

"Now I know he's not real. He doesn't have a name, and he's a perfect lover? I'm not buying it," she said, shaking her head but grinning. "Well, I can think of a few people worse than an imaginary boyfriend..." Ginny said, giving Hermione a look that said some things were best not to think about.

"Like Ron." Hermione said, the words slipping out of her mouth too quickly. Ginny snorted in laughter, assuring Hermione she hadn't been out of line.

"Well, it could be worse even than Ron. It could be Malfoy!" Ginny laughed, her words making Hermione turn bright red, and stiffen with guilt.

"Yeah..." Hermione tried to agree quickly to cover her embarrassment, but the feigned laugh that came out of her mouth was all wrong. Ginny was looking at her with a calculating expression.

"Oh god! It IS Malfoy!" Ginny shrieked in shock, launching up from the bed, and staring at Hermione with a mixture of horror, and disbelief.

"SHH!" Hermione hissed, yanking out her wand and pointing it at the door. "Muffliato!"

Ginny's mouth was hanging open, gaping at her best friend. Hermione's mind spun, preparing for the worst possible reaction.

"It's not that bad, Ginny!" Hermione tried to counter her friend's unspoken worries. "He's feeling a bit confused, but I think he's actually coming around!"

"Malfoy? Coming around?" Ginny didn't believe it, but sat back on the bed, lowering her voice. "Hermione, what if he's just using you? He could do something awful! What if he tells his friends?!"

"He can't tell them any more than I could tell Ron or Harry," Hermione assured her, remembering the pained look on his face. "In fact, he had some very strong feelings about what they thought, and still chose to spend the afternoon with me. As for 'using me' – the same could be said of myself, Ginny..."

"He's their ringleader. You really think they're going to shun him for having sex?" Her words stung, and Hermione could see her point. She'd been hoping that if it came down to it, Draco wouldn't make up some lie or humiliate her just to save face. It was a lot of hoping. But was it worth the risk?

"Ginny, I know what I saw. He was practically in tears over what his friends would think of him if they found out. And his family. He's too scared to tell anyone! And if neither of us tells, no one will know!" She said, hoping she was as right as she convinced herself she was.

"I won't tell anyone," Ginny promised immediately, and then her eyes widened.

"...Malfoy?" She hissed, as if for confirmation. Hermione nodded, letting her head fall into her hands.

"Now you know why I didn't want to tell." Hermione said, feeling miserable with all of her previous elation replaced new worries.

"Now I know why you were so upset about it," Ginny countered, giving Hermione an understanding look. "Malfoy: great in bed, but shite at manners." She joked, chuckling to herself, but still visibly shaken.

"Are you going to do it again?" She asked after a moment of pensive silence, giving Hermione an impish grin. Hermione smirked back, feeling a spark of enthusiasm at the thought.

"I don't know," she said, wondering if Malfoy would even be able to deal with it happening twice. "I'm not going to say no if he offers..." She clarified, giggling at the thought of Malfoy sending her a note asking to meet her.

"Well, I wish you luck." Ginny said, seeming to have warmed to the idea a bit, even though she still seemed apprehensive.

"Ginny... He has a really cute smile when he lets his guard down." Hermione felt weird admitting this, but had to share it nonetheless, knowing she couldn't tell anyone else.

"Well, he's not ugly... Just an ignorant git," Her friend replied, laughing and giving it a thought, before asking, "What's he like?"

"In bed or when he's not being a prat?" Hermione asked.

"Both." Ginny replied, genuinely interested.

"Well, when he's not being an ass, he's actually pretty funny," She admitted, recalling his wand jibe, "But he has a boy's sense of humor. He's still pretty full of himself, but he manages to make it seem charming, especially when he's trying to get into your knickers." Ginny laughed, and waited for her to continue.

"In bed? He's a bit rough," Hermione showed Ginny her shoulder, the bruises and hickeys that he hadn't appeared to be thinking about. "But it's a good kind of rough. Never too hard or mean. And he's actually really skilled with his hands... And mouth..." She blushed at this, remembering just how good he'd been. "It's like he's not satisfied until I've come at least a billion times."

"Jeez. That's lucky. I've heard some guys don't even think about anything but their own..." She gestured to her privates and laughed, not having much experience of her own.

"I kind of feel bad for Lavender..." Hermione said, thinking of how unsatisfying Ron had been. Maybe that's why they were always all over each other? Trying to make up in time what they lacked in talent.

Ginny laughed at Hermione's comment, and Hermione considered herself extremely lucky to have a friend as accepting and sympathetic as Ginny.

Chapter 15: Decisions/Doubts

Draco lay in bed, thinking about what he'd done. Again. She'd gone from great to amazing,

taking everything he had, playing along with him as he had her beg him to spank her, over and over again. She'd lasted longer than Pansy, or anyone else he'd been with, as he pushed orgasm after orgasm on her, wracking her body with pleasure, and she, in turn, gave him as much pleasure as he could take before he couldn't get hard anymore.

"Maybe next time I'll go slower, make it last as long as possible..." He mused, thinking of how hard and fast he'd taken her, repeatedly. He felt a bit sore from it, his abs aching, his legs weak, and his sac feeling drained and empty.

He'd taught Hermione the spell he used to clean himself up, noticing how he leaked out of her, dripping down her thighs. It'd been the reason he'd taken her a third time, seeing her bent over the desk, cum leaking down her legs, her face begging for more.

"Next time?" He wondered, seeming to already know that there would be a next time. When had he made that decision? Sometime between hugging her and seeing her glowing face, trying to explain her absence to her friends over dinner.

"How did they not see it, written all over her face? She couldn't walk, sit, or stand comfortably; every movement had to remind her of what we'd done." He brooded, thinking of how happy she'd looked, even though she had to have been as sore as him. He had to have her again, as soon as he could. He wanted to drag her over to him, and keep her next to him while he recuperated, being able to smell her shampoo, feel her thick hair, soft skin on his, see her flashing that playfully reproachful look that she'd tried to intimidate him with. He'd seen the humor in her eyes, felt the smile she pressed into his chest, trying to hide that she'd thought his joke was funny. He felt resolved to make her laugh at something stupid, to break her image of the mature spoilsport she seemed to enjoy.

He had no doubt that she'd be willing to shag him again, but was more worried about how she would act in class. Were they going to keep pretending nothing had happened? He didn't think he could risk teasing her in front of the class anymore, in case she took it seriously and didn't give him a second chance. She'd given him more than anyone else had, and he wasn't about to jeopardize that just to make some stupid joke.

'There's nothing wrong with you, Malfoy.' She'd said, telling him what he had needed to hear. He'd been so worried about how others would react, it hadn't even occurred to him that they might be the ones who were wrong. He wasn't messed up for enjoying a mudblood: they were wrong for thinking it mattered. She was just as powerful as any pureblood, and more intelligent than half the ones he hung around with. He couldn't honestly believe anymore that she was worth less than Crabbe or Goyle or even that Weasley slob. She was the only person in their year who had better marks in all of their classes than Draco did.

He rolled over, wondering if he'd ever be brave enough to actually be friends with her, or have the daring to stop his Slytherin friends from teasing her? He wasn't sure if he had the guts to, but he liked to imagine that he would try.

Hermione walked into the great hall with Ginny the next morning and instantly looked to the Slytherin table.

"He's looking." Ginny had looked, too, watching his eyes raise from his conversation to find them, and his lips tilted in the tiniest of smirks, before he went back to chatting with his goons, Crabbe and Goyle.

"He sort of smiled." The redhead noted, exchanging looks with Hermione.

"He's probably worried someone will notice if he's too obvious." Hermione brushed it off, her heart pounding, even at the small smirk. He at least wasn't pretending she didn't exist or that it hadn't happened.

The two girls sat down and helped themselves to toast and eggs, waiting for the two boys to join them. Hermione tried not to glance at the Slytherin table too often, but found herself looking more than a few times to see him engaged in conversation, for the first time all week. Was it because of last night? She pulled a book out, and diverted her attention from him, quickly becoming engrossed and losing track of even her food.

Draco glanced up from his conversation with Goyle to look at the book covering Hermione's face. Was she hiding from him? She'd looked at him when she entered, but hadn't returned his smile, preferring to talk to her Weasley friend. Had she decided to disregard him, then? He didn't believe that was the case. Maybe she was worried her friend would notice. He grinned and carefully pulled his wand from his robe, returning to his conversation, and hid it under the table. He pointed it toward her book and put into practice the non-verbal spellcasting they had been learning in Defense Against the Dark Arts. He envisioned what he wanted to do and waved his wand, cautious that nothing but the table was between them. Her eyes peeked up over her book, her eyebrows furrowed with curiosity.

He looked away, licking his lips and fixing his smirk in place.

Hermione's eyes stuttered over the neat writing that was quickly scrawling itself inside her book.

'Look at me, Granger.'

She almost choked, looking over her book and pulling her own wand out. Draco's eyes met hers for only an instant, but the way his tongue ran across his lips reminded her of every time he'd touched her. She turned to Ginny, her wand raised, ready to erase it quickly if anyone else looked.

"Ginny, look." She hissed, hiding her smile behind her book. Ginny gazed over and read the writing that overlapped the page number on the bottom of the page.

"That him?" She asked, glancing around and seeing Malfoy looking all too innocent, talking to Goyle.

"He licked his lips at me!" Hermione whispered, feeling still-aching parts of hers throb at the memories. She waved her wand, muttering a counter-spell to erase the words on her library book.

"Send him one back!" Ginny encouraged, Hermione's giddiness contagious. Hermione looked over again, and realized she couldn't.

"He hasn't got any paper to write on!" She murmured. She and Ginny peeked up from the book to Malfoy, who was paying them no attention. He had lost his teasing smirk and appeared upset.

"Talking to a blockhead like Goyle must be hard." Ginny thought aloud, making both girls catch

gazes and giggle.

"You keep looking at her." Goyle's words penetrated his mind, sinking in slowly.

"Keep looking at who?" Draco inquired, darting his eyes around as if the least bit uncertain whom Gregory was talking about.

"Granger." Goyle retorted, his voice too loud.

"Goyle," Draco's expression dropped, his voice low and menacing. "I am not looking at Granger."

"You were saying her name in your sleep again," Goyle persisted, but his voice had lowered, matching Draco's in volume. "What's going on, Draco."

"Forget about it, Goyle." Draco told him in an undertone, wondering why he had had to pick this particular topic to be perceptive about.

"What're you two whispering about?" Crabbe was suddenly interested, and as Goyle faced him, his mouth open to speak, Draco pointed his still-hidden wand at the large boy.

"Nothing," Draco answered as Goyle's open mouth remained silent. "Just chatting." Crabbe looked away, once again more interested in the sausage and bacon than in the conversation.

"Muffliato." Draco murmured before releasing Goyle from his spell, dulling their conversation to those around them.

"Why'd you do that?" The robust boy asked, touching his mouth and scowling.

"Goyle, do not tell anyone about this," Draco warned, "Not even your own mother. If you tell anyone about the names or the looking, I swear I will curse you. It is none of your business, so forget about it."

"Okay, Draco," Goyle's anger had faded into disappointment, "I was just wondering." he added, as though to appease his blond leader.

"Stop wondering." Draco snarled and looked away, careful not to look toward a certain other table.

A/N: Dripping_Poison: Thank you so much! Unfortunately I can't take requests for the upcoming chapters, since I've already got them written, and am just uploading them one a day. There's definitely more sexytimes coming up, so I hope you enjoy!~

Chapter 16: Bathrooms and Butts

"You going home for the holidays, Hermione?" Ron asked over dinner; he'd just gotten a letter from Mrs. Weasley saying Harry and Hermione were invited for Christmas break.

"I'm afraid so, Ron," She said, poking her fork into her kidney pie. "My parents are planning a

trip to Italy." She'd been the one to suggest it to them, unable to face christmas at Ron's, where memories would run rampant.

"That sounds lovely!" Ginny threw in, beaming at Hermione. The brunette smiled back, glad for the escape from Ron and Lavender's eye-sore of a relationship, as well as the confusing mess that was Malfoy. Even if only for a short while. He hadn't ignored her until he was around his friends. He seemed determined to not even look at Hermione around them. She'd noticed Goyle watching her a couple times, and wondered if Draco had told his friends and decided he was done with her. She determined that if he was done, she would have to ignore him as well. She hadn't sent him any notes or asked to meet him in over a week. Attempting to ignore the uncomfortable pang she felt whenever she looked at him, she found herself morbidly wondering if he and Ron both found someone better. Was she cursed?

Ginny had no insight, except for saying that he was a prat and not to be upset. Hermione kept remembering the desolation written on his face as he'd been telling her what was wrong. Couldn't stop feeling his arms around her, returning her comforting words. She thought he'd gotten over his distaste of her parentage. Perhaps not.

Draco found himself trapped in his common room most evenings, forced to sit and banter with his fellow Slytherins, or just lounge, and prove there was nothing going on. Goyle hadn't said a word about his suspicions in over a week, and the silence, as well as not being able to get close to Hermione without causing further unrest, were driving him mad. He was worried that if he acted rashly, Goyle would take his suspicions to someone else. He wasn't smart enough to figure it out on his own, so he'd at least ask Crabbe's opinion. Maybe others. He couldn't risk anyone finding out. Especially Pansy. She'd been getting clingier as he pushed her away. She got jealous whenever he spoke to any girl, and she'd started a fight with a fourth year for looking too hard at him. He could only imagine what she'd do if she found out he'd been sleeping with Hermione Granger.

Potions had been one of the few days he'd been able to escape his friends, but the potion Slughorn had set them that day had shut off all conversations, and kept all eyes on their cauldrons. One girl had managed to set her robes on fire, and another singed her eyebrows by stirring to fast.

As the holidays approached, he felt his tension mount, unwilling to go home so pent up, and irritated. He needed a release. He needed Hermione. Two weeks after they'd last spoken, right after dinner, he excused himself from his friends, saying he was going to use the prefects bathroom for a 'proper' bath. He forced his feet to start slowly up the stairs, keeping a bored look as he was surrounded by other houses going to their dormitories. He could see the tall mop of red hair that marked where Hermione had to be walking, and followed it slowly, letting other Gryffindors pass him as his friends parted ways, to go to the dungeon. As soon as they were out of sight, he pulled his wand from his robes, hiding it in the black mass of cloth, and pushed his way through several groups of people.

"Diffindo!" He muttered, pointing his wand at Hermione's bag. It split instantly, spilling it's contents all over the floor.

Hermione gasped, and stopped, stooping to pick things up, narrowly saving a pot of ink from someone's foot as they tried to step around her. Her two friends knelt to help her, scooping up her belongings, and shoving them in her bag. Hermione seemed to be sorting things before putting them in, taking twice as long as her friends to put things in her bag.

Draco thought quickly, thinking of how to get her friends to leave, or get her attention, without theirs. He was being shuffled past, with the crowd, unable to hide, and wait.

"Problems, Granger?" He shot over the heads of a couple second years as he passed, earning him glares from all three. Weasley made a rude gesture, earning a glare from a passing seventh year Ravenclaw.

He fought against the crowd, darting down a side corridor, hiding behind a suit of armor, waiting for them to pass again. As soon as the bushy brown hair was in sight, he pointed his wand again, repeating the spell.

Hermione's things spilled across the ground for the second time.

"Bloody hell, Hermione, what's wrong with your bag?" Weasley was saying, staring down at the contents that lay scattered.

"Probably too many books. You guys go ahead. I'm going to pop into the prefect's bathroom to relax after I get it fixed." She sounded vexed, as she knelt on the ground, inspecting the hole in the side of her bag, as though looking for weak threads, or worn patches.

"Alright. See you in the common room." Potter said, waving as they departed, giving her a sympathetic look, and sharing a look with Weasley that said they probably had bags full of sweets, instead of books.

"See you." Weasley was saying, walking away quickly, as though escaping. Was he worried she'd make him carry her books? Draco watched them both vanish, and saw Hermione look around suspiciously as she fixed her bag, and began placing things inside in an orderly fashion. Draco watched the last few people trickle down the corridor as she worked, and removed himself from his hiding spot.

"I hear you fancy a bath, Granger..." He said quietly, walking past her, and turning, to watch her stand, her bag sorted, her expression guarded. He walked backward, facing her as he spoke, heading down the hallway.

"I can give you a few tips on relaxing, if you like." He winked, and spun around, turning the corner, and heading toward the hidden bathroom.

The footsteps he heard behind him told him she was following. His eyes swept the hall, searching for eavesdroppers, or anyone hiding. The corridor was deserted, and he slowed, letting the Gryffindor catch up as he reached the portrait.

"Mermaid scales." He said, feeling displeased with the words on his tongue, as the door opened, allowing them entrance to the prefect's bath. She followed him in silently, the door closing behind them as they entered the empty room.

"I don't think I've ever actually seen anyone else in here..." Draco observed, looking around, and kneeling next to the tub, to turn a tap on.

"I noticed something similar. It's actually several bathrooms. There's a compression charm on the whole thing, making it all fit into what seems like one room, but when you give the password,

what bathroom you get depends on what you're expecting. I'm not sure how many there are, but whenever I come with another girl, I find it's more likely to be a room with other girls in it, like a public bath."

"Public bath?" Draco's face twisted at the thought, and he looked again at the tub, half full of water, and pulled two towels from the rack, setting them next to the tub. Granger seemed to be standing well away, her cheeks pink, as though embarrassed to be here.

"They're popular in Japan." Her voice was quiet, and she wouldn't meet his eyes. She was fishing for something to talk about, suddenly shy. Draco grinned, removing his shoes and socks slowly, torturing her with how slowly he was setting them aside, looking at her the whole time.

Hermione's anger at Draco ripping her bag twice had faded, replaced by intimidation as he stared her down, removing his clothes slowly. She'd followed him expecting another row, or maybe expecting him to grab her passionately, and make her forget her irritation. She hadn't expected him to actually start the bath, or a conversation.

"Wouldn't it be hard to relax in a bath with loads of other people?" He asked, sounding entirely baffled at the idea.

"I suppose, if it's too noisy, or there are too many people." Hermione conceded, preferring baths to herself as well. Ginny wasn't a terrible bathmate, but it was more of a fun time, than a relaxing one, gossiping, and trying new taps.

"Even though it's a walk from the dungeons, I prefer this one to the one in the dormitory." Draco said, pulling his robe over his head, and folding it neatly, setting it aside, and standing in only his boxers.

"Oh?" Hermione said, her voice barely above a squeak, feeling her face burn bright red, and looking around, as though she'd never inspected the place before. The slowness of him preparing calmly for a bath had set her on edge, and she found herself feeling suddenly self-conscious. He previously hadn't given her time to feel this embarrassed.

"It's similar to the one I have at home." He said, turning the tap off, and approaching her slowly. Hermione looked at him, gawking at his words.

"You have a bath like this at your house?" She asked, trying to imagine the room squished into her own parents' small home.

"This one's bigger, and the decorations are way different, but it's more like this one, than the one in the dormitory." He said, shrugging, and taking hold of her hand, to lead her to a bench near the wall. She sat down, letting him kneel before her.

"That's..." She paused, wanting to say 'ridiculous', or 'excessive', but wondering if he'd be offended. "Wow." She said, drawing his eyes as he removed her shoes for her, and her socks, her legs tingling where his fingers skimmed her skin.

"My parent's bath is even better," he smirked, his fingers brushing against her toes as he pushed her sock off, setting it on the bench next to her, and the other removed items. "It's at least this big, but has fewer taps. And a few more charms, making the floor warm to walk on," He said, as he pulled her to her feet, her bare skin touching the cold stones. "And the water

never goes cold while you're in it. The towels are even warm. It's got a small waterfall from the west ceiling, and a door that leads right into their closets." Hermione said nothing, astounded by what he'd described. Was he playing with her, or telling the truth? She decided to tell Ginny about it later, and see what she thought.

"I'm not allowed to bathe in there anymore, since I've got my own bathroom, but if they go out of town, I always sneak in." He was grinning mischievously at her as he pulled her own robe over her head, and set it aside, looking into her eyes, instead of her bared body, or knickers.

"That's nice." She said, imagining bathing under a waterfall. Would it be painful, or more like a massage?

"What's a muggle lavatory like?" Malfoy said, surprising her with the question, and the curiosity in his eyes.

"More like the ones in the dormitories. The richer muggles have larger ones, with fancier things, but most muggles have one or two per house, that are about the size of those, with showers, and the toilets in the same room." She looked toward the door behind which the toilets were, wondering if his bathroom shared the separation. The look on his face said so.

"Showers? Muggle bathrooms leak?" He seemed confused.

"No, not like that. A shower is... Like a standing tub, but the water doesn't stay. Like a waterfall, but from one faucet, above your head, and it drains right out."

"Oh." He seemed to have trouble picturing it, the look on his face making Hermione giggle.

"There's a door, or curtain to keep it from getting the whole bathroom wet, and a very small tub to keep it from splashing out. Sometimes only a couple inches high." His face scrunched, as if trying to imagine it. Hermione's embarrassment was fading, the comfortable conversation putting her nerves at ease, and she laughed, thinking of a way to explain.

"I can bring a picture after the holidays, and show you." She offered, feeling strange, sharing bits of her life with him. She'd offered to share with Ron, and been turned down, his father's obsession making him uninterested in seeing more.

"Sure." Draco smiled, seeming genuinely curious, and unabashed. He was pulling her closer, his hand sliding around her, unclasping her bra as they spoke, comfortably pulling the fabric away. His fingers trailed after it, touched her ribs, and breasts, his eyes holding hers. Their conversation seemed entirely awkward, and distracting from the intimate way he undressed her, touching her slightly here and there, making her skin prickle with goosebumps.

"Granger..." His face was an inch from hers, his hands had slid down her back, their bare chests pressed together, his fingers skimming her hips, and gently squeezing her ass. His expression seemed almost confused. "Are you wearing a thong?"

Draco watched her face turn red again, coming close to Weasley's hair color as he gripped her bare cheeks, his fingers pressing into soft, pliable flesh. It was like a dream come true, the lacy black underwear perfect, and sexy.

"Do you like it?" Her voice was meek, but her smile was seductive. Her blushing cheeks

complimenting her sparkling eyes. The perfect mixture of sultry, and coy. Was she not used to going this slowly? Did she find it easier to simply lose herself from the start? Draco found her nervousness endearing, encouraging him to continue toying with her, curious just how long she'd take to get comfortable.

"It's beyond sexy," he replied, letting his fingertips dig in slightly, his lips brush against her ear. She shivered against him, her hands tracing their way up his arms, to his shoulders. "Show me?" He asked, layering his voice with every ounce of desire he felt, and an ounce of demand, moving slightly back from her. Her face was still red, and her eyes widened at his request, bashful, and embarrassed to be watched. She let her arms fall from his shoulders slowly, staring into his eyes, searching them as she stepped away. She'd played along with his humiliation games in the heat of the moment. Would she play along when there was no offered reward as an excuse?

She turned, letting him stare as she spun, cooperating with his perverse amusement. It was over too soon, and he stood back a few more steps, eyeing her with a calculating look. He enjoyed the black lace almost as much as he enjoyed her bare skin. He wondered which was more embarrassing for her.

"Is this more embarrassing than being naked?" He asked, unable to contain his curiosity, watching as she tried to hide her face.

"I'm not sure," she answered, and he could see her thinking about it. "I suppose it could be, since it feels like you're thinking about it more, rather than just acting on it..." She tried to explain.

"Are you willing to be more embarrassed?" He asked, his mind going faster than a Firebolt as he thought of what he'd like to do to her.

"I... I suppose." She said, unable to look him in the eye. He smiled wolfishly, loving that she was so obliging. He'd only managed to get Pansy to play his games, and she'd whined through most of it.

"Kneel on the floor, on your hands and knees." He ordered, excitement making it hard to control his voice. She did what he asked, sinking slowly to her knees, and then all fours, glancing up at him once in place. He stepped around behind her, enjoying the view of her perfectly shaped ass, and the eyes peeking around her mass of hair at him. She was just as curious to see where this would go as she was self-conscious.

"Spread your legs more," he said, tapping her foot with his, savoring how quickly she obeyed. "That's beautiful." He said, the image of her on the ground almost perfect.

"Thank you..." Her voice was quiet, and bashful, bringing a smile to his lips.

"Don't thank me, yet, Granger." He said villainously, enjoying how her eyes shot to his, fear written across her face. She was worried, but she wasn't running.

"Rub yourself." He said, staring straight into her brown eyes, loving how her face changed from fear to chagrin. He watched silently as she gave him a defiant look for a few seconds, then sighed, and lifted her hand, sliding it between her legs, and pressing her fingers into her panties, stroking back and forth. Her head sank, looking toward the floor instead of at him, and he let her

touch herself for a few moments, amused at how forced, and unpleased she seemed.

“Move your knickers to the side,” he ordered, watching as her fingers slid easily under the fabric, and slid it out of the way. “Farther.” He encouraged, looking at her exposed pink folds. She pulled it farther to the side, exposing more of herself, and relieving herself of her dignity.

“Hold it there.” He said, finally moving closer, and crouching behind her. Her muscles were taut as he knelt, looking closer at what she was revealing. Her whole body looked tense, and she gasped when he touched her. His hand grazed her back, and gripped her ass, making her back arch with the sensation. He let his other hand run up her inner thigh, and skim across the very edges of her sex, barely touching, but spreading the slick moisture that seemed to have soaked her knickers before she pulled them away.

“You’re enjoying being humiliated, Granger,” he observed, sliding his fingers back into the wetness, and giving her ass another squeeze. “Should I make it worse?” He offered.

“N-no...” She protested, her voice cracking on the short word, her head shaking harshly side to side, her hair bouncing around.

“Are you sure?” He asked, recognizing the embarrassment and enjoyment in her answer. She wanted more, but was too ashamed to ask for it. No other girl had really enjoyed letting him do this. No other girl had been aroused by his perversion, or so responsive. He grinned, touching her gently one more time, and moving away, stripping his boxers easily.

Hermione trembled, his fingers sending shivers through her as he touched her softly, her eyes squeezed tight, waiting for him to go further. She heard him scoot away, and his boxers shuffling on the floor away from them. She held her breath, listening for his reapproach, waiting for him to take her.

A soft splash made her turn her head, searching for the source. His head was bobbing just above the thick pink bubbles, right inside the pool-sized bath.

“Care to join me?” He asked, grinning impishly at her. She immediately sat up, putting her hands on her thighs, and staring down at him with disbelief, and indignation. “You said ‘no’.” He reminded her, making her glare as she slid to the edge of the tub. She didn’t tell him what she’d been thinking, seeing clearly on his face that he already knew she’d wanted him to keep going. She slid her panties off, and left them next to the tub, joining him in the bath.

A/N: This chapter is mostly unedited, and I'm waiting for my lovely Final to catch up, since this one was twice the length of the previous chapters. I'll re-upload the edited versions of this and all future chapters as he gets to them. Please forgive any stuttering sentences, or awkward errors!

Chapter 17: Cute. Sexy. Beautiful.

Her irritation ebbed as she slid into the water, the scented bubbles relaxing her frayed nerves, and turbulent thoughts. His smirking face was no match for her favorite bath, and she looked over at him curiously.

"Of all the taps, I didn't think you'd like this one." She said, ribbing him, and letting her hand sift through some of the foam.

"It's not my favorite. But I knew you liked it." He shrugged, as if it were normal to know someone's favorite bath water.

"How?" She asked, slightly touched by his decision to fill the tub with her favorite, instead of his.

"I noticed the smell on you, in potions, when you were next to me." He admitted, his cheeks flushing slightly pink. He wasn't embarrassed when it came to sex, but he was embarrassed about that? She grinned, wondering if she could tease him with it later.

"Thank you." She smiled, pushing her hands through the bubbles again, playing with the water.

"What flower is it?" He asked, drawing her confused look. "The scent," he explained. "It's floral. But I can't tell what exactly." Hermione laughed, and pushed away from the edge of the tub, floating farther into the pool as she relaxed.

"It's lavender." She answered, calling across the tub at him.

"Oh." He said, watching her swim away, his eyes following her movements.

"So what made you decide to terrorize my bag today?" Hermione hedged, wondering about his past two weeks of near silence towards her.

"I finally managed to get away from my friends," he said, swimming a bit farther into the tub. "I've been going crazy in our common room, but Goyle suspected something, so I couldn't get away. I didn't want to risk him telling Crabbe, or Pansy."

Hermione tread water, staring at the blond as he inched closer, covering half the pool slowly, leaving a small path through the bubbles, which was sealing itself as he swam farther. His honesty shocked her, striking her speechless for several moments as she processed his words.

"Why did he suspect?" She asked, feeling a twinge of guilt as she thought of Ginny. Should she tell him that her friend knew?

"He saw me looking at you..." The way he looked away, and the tone of his voice told her there was more to it. She waited, hoping he decided to open up. His lips were moving with words, but she couldn't hear what he was saying, his head tilting down, his cheeks pink again.

"Sorry?" She asked, swimming a bit closer, and staring at his lips.

"He heard me say your name," he said loud enough for her to hear, looking at the wall, and visibly fighting to keep a straight face. "In my sleep." He finished, quieter, but just barely audible. Hermione felt her own cheeks burn at the admission, and looked away, only a few feet from him, unsure how to break the tension.

"Ginny knows," she blurted, trying to make him feel less awkward about his dreams. He looked at her, confused by the words. "My friend, Ginny. She found out." She said, giving him an apologetic look.

"The Weasley girl?" He asked, his eyebrows pulling together when she nodded.

"She found out, and I tried to lie, but... Apparently I didn't do that well. And she actually took it pretty well." Hermione said cheerily, remembering how Ginny had cheered her on the morning he'd graffitied her book.

"That's..." He seemed lost for words, as if he wanted to say 'good', but couldn't get the word out. "I threatened to curse Goyle if he said anything..." He said, looking at the water angrily. Hermione inched closer, recognizing the look on his face. He was upset with himself.

"That's okay," she reassured him, thinking for any brightside. "You didn't curse him, so that's good," she said hopefully, knowing he would have, if pressed. "If you told him, could you trust him to keep it secret?" She asked, knowing how much better she felt with just one person she could talk to about it.

"If I threatened to curse him, or actually hexed him into keeping quiet, sure. Otherwise, he might let it slip on accident." Draco said, batting absently at the water, seeming distracted by his thoughts. Hermione swam right up in front of him, forcing him to look at her.

"You should tell someone you trust. You'll feel loads better." She suggested, wondering if he even had any trustworthy friends.

"I'll try." He said, giving her a small smile. She returned it, and swam around him, her leg brushing his as she moved.

Draco pulled his thoughts away from the dark spiral that they threatened to pull him towards, and focused on the girl next to him.

"Did Weasley lose her mind when she found out?" He asked, letting the thought of the redheaded girl's imaginary blow-up amuse him.

"A bit," Hermione admitted, her face tinged pink. "But she seemed okay with it when I told her you weren't really as big a prat as you act." Hermione splashed him with water, grinning. He grinned back, taking her insult in stride.

"Did you tell her how great I am in bed?" He asked, arrogantly, swimming after the brunette. Her hair seemed to trail after her as she swam backwards, making thick streaks through the pink froth. "Or how much you liked being spanked?" He teased, his eyes sparkling with mischief.

"No!" Hermione said hotly, her face flushing instantly. She was so much fun to play with. "But I did tell her how polite you get when you want something." She teased back, making him cringe.

"Don't ruin my reputation!" He whined jokingly at her, "It took five and a half years to build!"

"Oh, sorry. So I shouldn't have told her how cute your real smile is?" She was taunting him, swimming away, and flirting playfully. Draco watched her gleeful face as she teased him, enjoying her sparkling eyes, her mischievous grin.

"You think I'm cute?" He asked, narrowing his eyes at her. She nodded, unable to talk as she laughed into her hand silently. "Cute?" He asked again, putting on an agitated face. "Malfoy's are not cute," he swam after her, quickly catching up, and trapping her against the edge of the

tub, his arms on either side of her head. "We are sexy, and fierce, and intimidating. Not 'cute'."

She stared at him defiantly, her face split into a giant grin.

"Okay, you're sexy. But the rest?" She made a face, and shook her head. "I don't see it."

He growled at her, a guttural, animal sound, glaring dangerously through his eyelashes at her still-grinning face. He slid closer, pressing his body to hers through the water, letting his mouth find her damp ear, and one of his hands tangle in her wet hair.

"'Cute', is the little moan you do when I make you cum," he growled, nipping at her ear, and massaging the back of her neck gently with the hand in her hair. "Your expression, when I'm inside you, making you forget our own name, is 'cute'," he could tell by the way her breathing had changed that she wasn't grinning anymore. "You being flustered over a few words is 'cute'. I am fierce." He bit her neck, making her gasp in surprise. He suckled a bit, leaving a hickey inside his teeth marks, and moved his head back, staring into her eyes.

Her expression was needy, and relaxed, letting him take control again. He leaned in, pressing his nose to hers, looking at her freckles, before letting her gaze captivate him. He tilted his head, letting his lips press into hers gently, staring into her eyes as he kissed her. The bronze highlights in her eyes seemed to dance in the torchlight, her eyelashes casting shadows across her cheeks as her eyes slid closed, her arms wrapping around his neck, her lips parting against his.

He kissed her gently, sinking into her, and letting his own eyes close. Her skin was slippery against his in the water, her lips soft on his. She seemed just as eager as he nudged her thighs apart underwater, wrapping them around him, and pulling him in. He took her gently, barely remembering his vow to go slowly, and make it last as long as possible. Her heat put the bath to shame, encompassing him, and making him groan in pleasure as he slid in.

"Fuck..." He muttered, trembling slightly as he struggled to hold onto his self-control, her softness threatening to take his whole mind, all of her muscles tense, and squeezing him from every angle, inside, and out.

Hermione clung to him, trying to remember how to breathe as he slid slowly in. He kept a reluctant pace, slow, and deep, fighting himself as he pleased her. His breathy, muttered expletive made her open her eyes, taking in his pained expression, and limp blond hair hanging in his face. Without the product keeping it held back in place, it seemed to creep down his forehead, sticking to his face, and hanging in his eyes. His skin looked white against the pink bubbles, his determined expression showing his restraint.

She buried her face in his neck, letting the feel of him soak into her. The sound of his breathing was harsh, but even, matching his thrusts. He slowly worked her up, taking his time as he brought her to a shaking orgasm, her voice echoing around the bathroom, her teeth biting into him. He kept going, pushing her over again, and again, holding his own climax back.

Hermione's mind was a blurry mess, unable to hold a coherent thought, unwilling to make it stop.

Draco left himself inside her, and scooted sideways along the wall, using his one arm, and his legs to anchor them both as he made his way toward the stairs. She seemed completely lost as

he moved, unaware of the change, and enjoying the way his relocation moved his hips.

He arrived at the stairs, and pulled out of her, making her whine quietly, and squeeze him tighter, displeased with his retreat.

"Don't worry, I'm not done." He assured her, pulling her arms away, and scooting her toward the stairs. He turned her around, and pressed her into the wall, bending her over, so that she lay across the floor of the room, with her hips at the edge of the tub, and her legs in the water. He admired the view briefly, staring at her splayed form, her heaving chest, her vulnerable position. And he took her, holding onto her wet hips, leaning over her, and whispering in her ear as he slid back inside.

"You're beautiful, Hermione." He said, speeding up, the slapping noises of their thighs hitting each other bouncing around the room, her moans joining them, encouraging him to go harder.

Hermione couldn't believe her ears, the words he'd said echoing her memories of Ron. Was he being honest, or just saying it in the heat of the moment? The way he was thrusting into her, grabbing a fistful of her hair, and bringing her lips to his, made her forget her worries, easily caught up in his burning need.

The cold stone underneath her torso had been a shock, but when he pulled away suddenly, panting, and heaving himself up next to her, she was startled, looking over at him, worried.

"Are you okay?" She asked, rolling to her side, and inspecting his face, his scrunched eyes, and clenched fists.

"Yeah. Too close." He said shortly, his chest rising and falling with his rapid breath. Hermione grinned, and slid over to him, easily straddling him, getting him back inside her. He groaned, his hands grabbing her hips as she slid down his shaft, his eyes meeting hers. She moved her hips slowly, torturously tipping him over the edge.

He trembled, tensing as he came, his face contorting as she didn't stop. She slid her fingers to her sex, rubbing herself softly as she moved on him, careful not to let his waning member fall out, bringing herself to the brink.

He was quickly hardening again, refilling her, and thrusting upward. She leaned down to kiss him, her breasts brushing his chest, her hair a wet curtain next to them. His expression was glazed, his fingers almost painful on her hips, his teeth pulling at her lip. She went just as slowly as he had, determined to torture him in the exact way she'd liked so much.

A/N: Also an unedited chapter for now. What could possibly happen next? Will things heat up, or cool down? Tune in next time for another episode of Mudblood Fever and Lingerie!

Chapter 18: Jealousy

Hermione stood in her knickers, staring into the mirror that was positioned above her dormitory bathroom's sink. The hickeys were fading, and her soreness was evaporating. She sighed, and moved to try on her dresses for the Christmas party. Her parents had obligingly sent her several from her closet at home, giving her options, in case some no longer fit. Slughorn's Christmas

party was that evening, and she'd been putting off picking out a dress.

She tried on a purple frilly number, quickly discarding it as the thin straps did nothing to hide her waning marks of passion. Two others followed the first, before she settled on a sleek peach gown, with a lacy shawl. She found a pair of cream heels, and a necklace to match, assembling the outfit quickly, and carrying all the parts back into her dormitory room, placing them in a neat pile in her trunk, for later.

Neither Lavender or Parvati said anything to her as she hid the outfit away, and donned her class robes, dragging a comb through her damp hair, and pulling on her shoes, before heading to breakfast.

Draco watched as the tall boy walked over to Hermione, and bent next to her on the bench, talking amicably with her. Cormac McLaggen had been speaking to her rather frequently recently, and as he watched the two converse, he saw her brown eyes dart toward him and away. He watched as McLaggen nodded, and walked off, looking all too happy. He watched, suddenly suspicious, as she looked over at his table again, looking almost sheepish as she met his eyes for barely a second, before hiding again in her book. He looked around her at her friends. Potter seemed wrapped up in his own world as usual, Ginny Weasley was sitting a few seats down, chatting with her own friends. But the other Weasley looked downright murderous. He was ignoring the blond who was trying desperately to get his attention, shoving her arms clumsily around him, and speaking in a babying voice.

Weasley shot a death glare at the book Granger was hiding behind, and shoved away from the table, his irritating girlfriend bouncing after him. Had the two friends had a row? Weasley wasn't trying to start a fight with Draco so he doubted that Weasley had found out about he and Hermione's trysts. And what had McLaggen looked so eager about? He picked at the food on his plate, wondering if he could ask her what was going on, or if she'd tell him to mind his own business. He decided not to ask her, and instead, eyed the redhead girl sitting a few seats down.

Draco shoved past a group of Gryffindor first years, easily catching up to the redhead who was making her way toward the transfiguration classroom.

"Weasley!" He called catching her just before she went in. All of her friends stopped, turning to look at him. He felt his stomach clench, watched by the group of fifth years.

"Can I have a word?" He asked, keeping his voice even, and his face his usual sneer.

"Is it about the detention Snape gave me?" She asked in a disheartened voice stepping away from her friends. "I'll join you guys in a minute." She gestured them into the classroom, and walked over to where Draco stood in his air of pompousness.

"Actually it's about Granger." He murmured, lowering his voice from passing students.

"Hermione? What about her?" Weasley looked worried, as though he was going to tell her she was in the hospital wing.

"Are her and Weasley having a row?" He asked, getting the words out before he could clam up.

"Sort of..." The redhead hedged, eyeing him suspiciously. "Why should I tell you?"

"Because..." He searched for any kind of reason. "You're the only person that knows... about... us," he forced out, feeling his face burn. The pair were getting odd looks from passerby, but no one dared stop and speak to the two. "I just want to know if it's because of me."

Ginny gave him a hard look, appraising him as she stared, as if summing him up with one glare.

"It's not." She said, her face still guarded.

"It seemed to involve that McLaggen boy." Draco observed, remembering the way Weasley had looked at her after the two's short conversation. The look on the female Weasley's face told him he'd hit the mark. She narrowed her eyes at him, and took on a defensive stance.

"What makes you think so?" She asked, aggressively.

"The way he stormed off after the two talked. What did they talk about?" He asked, knowing she'd been close enough to hear, and hoping she was willing to share her knowledge.

She looked at him for a moment, summing him up again.

"Why do you even want to know?" She asked, smirking right back. He opened his mouth, only for silence to fill the air. Why did He want to know?

"I..." He stammered, meeting the girl's fierce gaze. "I'm not sure." The words upset him, admitting he didn't know, especially to a Weasley.

"Are you jealous?" She was eyeing him with disbelief, and he looked at her with horror.

"No!" He denied, instantly feeling the truth of her words. "Of course not."

"Reeeally?" She drew the word out, her face twisting into an evil grin. He felt something akin to panic at her look, wondering what she was going to do with the knowledge. Would she tell her friends? Or his? Was this why he hadn't wanted to ask Hermione herself? He was worried she'd be upset if she found out he felt jealous. She wasn't his. She could do what she liked. And he expected her to tell him as much.

"Don't tell her." He commanded the redhead, his panic deepening.

"Why not?" She challenged, instantly defiant.

"Because... I don't... I don't want her to get the wrong idea." He whispered, ignoring the emptying hallway. He was going to be late for class either way.

"What idea's that?" Weasley seemed ready to defend her friend in an instant if he said the wrong thing. He could see her hand hiding in her pocket, no doubt on her wand.

"That I think I own her. I don't," he said, fervently, hoping to persuade her friend to the truth. "But I don't want anyone else thinking they do, either."

"I see," she seemed to think about it for a second. "Ron upset her, so she agreed to go to the Slug Club Christmas party with McLaggen to get back at him. Ron hates McLaggen."

Draco felt sudden loathing for the guy himself. Was Hermione really interested in him, or JUST using him to get back at her ex? What about himself?

“Thanks.” He said, just as the bell rang, and ran off down the hall, leaving the redhead to her class as he darted towards his own, his thoughts spinning with doubt and jealousy.

A/N: Catching up to where I am in my writing. Not too close yet, though. Sorry for how short this chapter is, the next one will be about three times longer!

Chapter 19: Gatecrashing

Hermione ducked next to her friends, hiding from the beastly McLaggen. He'd tried to grab her under the mistletoe, and she just barely escaped. Harry and Luna covered her as the three got drinks, and chatted with Professor Trelawney. Hermione tried not think too much about what the old bat was complaining about, keeping an eye out for her date.

She'd managed to dodge him a few times and was standing near the entrance, trying to sneak away from the unenjoyable party altogether, when Filch marched in, escorting a peeved-looking Malfoy.

She watched as he walked him straight over to Slughorn, and accused him of trying to gatecrash.

“Oh, let the boy stay, it's Christmas!” Slughorn was calling, clapping Draco on the shoulder. He looked more uncomfortable than she'd ever seen him, and wandered closer, wondering if she'd get a chance to chat with him. A small part of her wondered if he'd hex McLaggen discreetly for her, to keep him away.

“There you are, Hermione! I've been looking all over for you!” Cormac had found her, and wrapped his arm around her shoulders. She looked up at him with a wan smile, and allowed him to lead her toward someone he wanted to introduce her to, talking the whole way. She shot a desperate look around for her friends, hoping they could come to her rescue, but found no one within a helpful distance. Even her silvery-haired secret seemed to have disappeared into the crowd. McLaggen pulled her to another person, shooting glares at a Slytherin fifth-year as they passed.

Hermione prayed to be set free, wishing she'd thought to bring her wand. But her purse had been too small, and she hadn't had any pockets to carry it in, so she'd left it behind, tucked safely into her trunk. As if answering her prayer himself, Cormac fell over, his arm slipping off of her, and leaving her free to disappear again. As several people moved forward to help her date, she moved away, back into the crowd, and towards the door.

A hand grabbed hers before she got there, and she groaned, turning to finally tell McLaggen off.

“Let's go!” The hurried whisper was a surprise, and she was pulled from the room, not by Cormac, but by Draco, his grey eyes glimmering with revelry. She followed him, grasping tightly to his hand as they escaped, ducking her head as they darted from the party.

"I hope no one saw us leave..." Hermione panted as they jogged down the corridor.

"I don't think they saw us together. They were all distracted by your date." Draco said, finally slowing to enter a deserted classroom. He held the door for her to enter, and she stepped quickly inside, casting one last glance around to make sure they hadn't been followed.

"I'm not worried about someone seeing us running from a party together. I mean, no one would believe THAT rumor," she said, confident in her analysis. "I was more worried about McLaggen following me out. You can't imagine how relieved I was when he tripped." She said, giving Draco a smile.

"He didn't trip." Draco said, raising his eyebrows, and sitting on top of a desk, his hands on his knees.

"Didn't you see? He fell right over, and landed on his face." She said, wondering how he could possibly have not seen. With how many people moved forward to help, it was as though the whole room had been watching.

"I saw. But he didn't trip." Malfoy's malicious grin told her what he meant, and she tried to stop the grin that tugged at her lips.

Draco watched the corners of her lips curl in an appreciative smile, and cocked his head to the side, taking in the view. She was silhouetted against the windows, the moonlight shining through them, the star-filled sky twinkling around her like a halo. Her face was flushed from running, and her eyes were gleaming with mischief, her small smile betraying her as she told him off for jinxing her date in a crowded room.

"Are you even listening?" She asked, tapping her foot, her still-excited eyes narrowing.

"Not really." He admitted, sliding from the desk, and stepping close to her, invading her personal space, and loving that she didn't back down. She stared defiantly into his eyes, her expression baffled that he'd confessed to not paying attention. He lifted a hand to her face, tracing the line of her mouth, erasing her expression of disbelief, and shushing her before she could scold him more.

"I wouldn't have done it if you didn't look so desperate," he whispered, his fingers tracing her jaw, "Or enchanting." He whispered the last in her ear, wrapping one hand gently around her waist, and taking her hand with his. He could still hear faint traces of the music from down the hall, and spun her in a slow circle, holding her close, feeling as if the world had been put on hold.

"You're not acting at all like yourself, Draco." She murmured, laying her head comfortably on his chest, effectively hiding her expression from him. He would bet a hundred galleons that she was blushing, and grinning like a fool. He certainly felt as though his grin was going to split his face in two.

"I don't feel much like myself," he said, hugging her close, swaying back and forth as they moved in a circle. "I feel like I've had a whole bottle of firewhiskey."

"What's that feel like?" She asked, and he could hear the teasing smile in her voice. The world was quiet, and soft, and he felt brave.

"It feels warm, and a little dizzy." He said, nuzzling her hair. She pulled him to a stop, and leaned back to look at him.

"If you're dizzy, we should probably stop spinning." She whispered, a concerned look overtaking her features as she inspected his face, looking for any signs of sickness.

"That's not what's making me dizzy." He whispered back, feeling the words coming out of their own volition. He wasn't sure if it was the party, her dress, or the stars shining through the windows, but the air felt different between them.

Hermione stared into his eyes, barely believing what she was hearing.

"DID you drink a whole bottle of firewhiskey?" She asked, frowning, and wondering if he was drunk. His face was flushed, but his eyes were too focused, right on her, piercing her with a warm gaze.

"No," his mouth lifted in an almost familiar smirk, but there wasn't even a hint of antagonism in it. "If I had, I wouldn't be nearly as charming."

"No one said you were charming..." She argued, poking fun at his ego. His words as he'd danced with her had been pretty bewitching, but she wasn't about to admit it.

"Then why are you blushing?" He teased back, his grey eyes sparkling merrily down at her. She ducked her chin, hiding her blush from him, and trying hard not to smile. She'd experienced the friendly, sexy side of him, but whatever this was, was new. The look in his eyes was different from the sexually-charged atmosphere she'd almost gotten used to. It was more intimate, nearly romantic. She could feel her heartbeat in her throat, feel his hand still clutched in hers, feel his eyes on the top of her head as she avoided his charged gaze for as long as possible.

He pulled her close again, and pulled his free hand up to lift her chin, forcing her to face him. She stared into his eyes as he leaned down, and kissed her, his eyes closing at the last second, his lips barely touching hers. Her own lids closed, and as she wrapped her arms around his shoulders, she felt her heart swelling in her chest.

He pulled away before she burst, and she felt a realization fall into place.

"I'm going to be devastated when this whole thing ends."

"I never want this to end..." He thought briefly, holding her in his arms, and staring down into her dark eyes. She was a dream come true, and he felt his mind racing, taking him to different possible outcomes. His friends would shun him. Her friends would hate him more. His father would probably disown him. Was all that worth this? He kissed her again, distracting himself from the overwhelming confusion, grasping her tighter to him.

She was responding easily, her fingers tangling in his hair, her lips parting with his. They'd stopped dancing, their minds far away from the music, and their hands exploring each other with vigor. He pulled her gently toward the window, and pressed her into the thick glass, lifting her so she sat on the ledge, her legs wrapping around him as he lifted her dress. His fingers skimmed across her thighs, gripping her bare skin, making her anticipate his next move.

She was kissing him back, seemingly unaware of the six story fall right behind her back. Draco pressed his sex to hers through their clothes, rubbing against her provocatively, searching her back for the clasp to her dress.

"Leave it." She murmured against his lips impatiently, scooting around, pulling her dress higher, and wiggling awkwardly out of her underpants. She tossed them unceremoniously to the side as Draco lifted his robes over his head, discarding them in a heap, and barely managed to pull his erection free of his boxers before he was on her again, kissing, touching, and rubbing.

Hermione tilted her hips, grinding against him, panting against his lips, putting aside all dark thoughts, and reveling in the moment. Whatever happened later, she would enjoy this; enjoy now.

She slipped off her high heels, and let them fall to the floor with dull thunks. Draco had found the zipper to her dress and pulled it down hastily, pushing the short sleeves down her arms. The marks he'd left on her shoulder were exposed, and he placed his mouth over one, renewing it with his teeth. Hermione gasped as he shifted his hold on her, slipping his shaft inside, and bit over her other waning hickeys.

She leaned back against the cold glass of the window, her bare shoulders barely protected from the chill by her hair, the thin fabric of her dress letting the cold seep through to her skin. She stared into Draco's face as he thrust into her over and over.

The yellow glow of the moon that shone on his pale skin, platinum hair, and silver eyes made him look ethereal, moonlight personified. Sweat gathered on his brow, his breathing heavy, his hands tight on her thighs, proving him real. He was just as real as Ron had been.

She felt herself tense at the thought of Ron, his betrayal still stinging, his indifferent attitude to her feelings making her feel instantly cold, and unhappy.

Draco felt her jerk as if someone had slapped her backward, and stopped, staring worriedly into her suddenly tear-filled eyes.

"What's wrong?" He asked, reaching out a hand to stroke her cheek. He was filled with horrible anticipation, imagining all number of horrible responses, and gave her a once-over, to make sure she wasn't bleeding, or, god forbid, he hadn't torn her dress. Everything looked fine, so he pulled slightly away, removing himself from her warm folds, and sliding his hand from her thigh to her arm.

"Nothing." She lied, looking away from his face, blinking rapidly to clear her watery eyes. He stared at her, deciding whether or not to call her on her obvious bluff. She was clearly upset about something, and he didn't want to make it worse by being insensitive. If he'd learned one thing from Pansy, it was that ignoring a problem only made the consequences worse in the long-run.

"Then why are you crying?" He asked, careful to keep his voice and face in check, knowing how the simplest misstep could cause bedlam.

"It's..." She trailed off, staring into his eyes with a slightly distrustful look. She wasn't going to lie again, but would she tell him the truth, either? He waited patiently for her verdict, his heart constricting tighter with every second that passed in silence.

"Would you be upset if I started dating someone?" She asked, catching Draco by surprise. He couldn't keep his face from twisting into a confused scowl, and words spilled out of his mouth before he thought about them.

"Are you going to date McLaggen?" He asked with a sour tone, the image of her face as the clown dragged her around the room clashing with his assumption.

"No," she said, and seemed equally appalled at the idea. "I didn't mean..." She scrunched up her face, and looked at his navel. "It was hypothetical." She said, aiming a frown into his stomach.

"Ah," he took a moment to gather his thoughts, and ran a finger up her still-bare thigh, watching the goosebumps that rose. "I suppose I'd be confused at the very least." He started, and looked up into her eyes, gauging her reaction to his words.

"This may be a secret," he continued, running his fingertips slowly up and down her leg as he spoke. "But I'd like to think we're friends," she was nodding gently, agreeing to his whispers, her eyes following his hand on her leg. "If you want to date someone, it's not really my business, but..." He waited till she met his eyes, hoping he wasn't crossing a line as he finished his thought. "I wouldn't be happy about it."

"Only Ginny knew about Ron and I..." Hermione told him, forcing the words out through her constricting throat. "But I thought we were... Together. Until he started dating Lavender..." She took a deep breath, trying to force back the sobs that threatened to break through her chest.

"Oh." His face held a painful comprehension, and she had to look away. Only Ginny knew about Draco and her... Was it going to end the same way, with him publicly snogging some pretty blonde? Would it be better to end it now, before that could happen? A white hand was entering her vision, slowly reaching for her face, and tilting it back up to meet a compassionate silver gaze.

"Weasley was stupid to give you up," Draco said, and she saw a slight hesitation in his mouth, hanging open silently for half a second before he got the rest of the words out. "You're better than that kind of rubbish treatment." She almost laughed as memories of Draco himself treating her worse popped into her mind.

"Coming from someone who's treated me like rubbish for years..." She teased, his words making her feel lighter, regardless of their past.

"As someone who treated you like rubbish for years..." He leaned in close, his voice dropping to barely a whisper. "I know you deserve better. And I'm sorry I didn't understand that sooner." His eyes were humorless, and Hermione's heart raced, jumping into her throat, her breath cut short by his words.

Hermione leaned forward and kissed him, twining her arms around his neck, and trying to convey her appreciation. He wrapped his arms around her back, pulling her away from the window, and against his chest. She felt him getting hard against her again, and eagerly scooted her hips closer, inviting him to continue.

Draco could hardly believe she was back in the mood, and rubbed against her, testing to see if

she'd pull away. She seemed more into it than before, practically dragging him back into her, making him moan in agonized bliss. His apology seemed to have struck some positive nerve, and she was moving against him in ways he couldn't refuse. He held her close, letting her wiggle, and squirm as he moved his lips down her neck, and across her collarbone.

"Wait, wait..." He panted, pulling away from her neck, but leaving himself inside her as he pinned her with a serious stare. "What are you doing for the holidays?" He asked, trying not to laugh as the question sunk in.

"What?" She was confused, and looking at him as though he'd grown a second head.

"What are you doing for the holidays?" He asked, moving his hips a tiny bit, as if to emphasise his words.

"Er... Going on holiday with my parents. Why?" She asked, her brows nearly touching in the middle as she frowned at him in bewilderment.

"Just wondering." He grinned at her, and ducked his head back to her neck, kissing and biting at her. He sucked viciously at the middle of her neck, breaking off with a grin, and moving to her collar, leaving matching hickeys in obvious places. She didn't seem to notice as he marked her, and he felt a sense of glee rise in him as he left several dark claims in all-too visible areas.

"Draco..." Her voice distracted him from his nefarious scheme, and he looked up, kissing her swiftly on her lips before she spoke again. "Is something wrong?"

"What do you mean?" He asked, frowning at the question.

"You seem distracted..." She observed, looking slightly frustrated.

"Oh?" He grinned, and braced his hands on her hips, making sure she was steady before he took her roughly, as hard and fast as he could, making her gasp, and curl around him, unable to speak as he teased her. "Is this what you want?" He panted in her ear, digging his fingers into her hips, enjoying how her legs tightened against him. Her head was leaning against his shoulder and she was making the softest noises as she came, her whole body tightening in small contractions around him, squeezing him from every direction.

"Oh, damn..." Draco groaned, burying his face in her shoulder as he climaxed. He relaxed against her, both of them panting, and shivering, catching their breath, far from ready to part ways for the holidays.

A/N: :)

Chapter 20: A Ring and a Confession

Hermione filed into the school with all of her friends, having met up with them on the train, coming back from holiday. Ginny had already asked her about Italy, and had been telling her all about Christmas at the Burrow. She was telling Hermione about what the twins had given her from the joke shop, when Hermione felt a shiver go up her spine, and turned to see Draco Malfoy walking right next to her, chatting with Goyle, as though he hadn't noticed she was there.

She felt the back of his hand brush against hers, lingering a bit too long to be accidental.

The crush of people on all sides was keeping anyone else from noticing the action, but Hermione's heart sped up, and she glanced at her friends, hoping they didn't notice. Ginny's eyes were on her, her eyebrows wiggling, telling Hermione silently that she'd noticed the blond right next to them. Neither drew attention to him, or to the fact that he was bumping into her occasionally, seeming oblivious in the packed hall.

When they parted ways, he finally looked over, for barely a second, out of the corner of his eye, and cut right in front of her, pressing his hand to hers as he passed, and giving her friends a dirty look as he and Goyle walked in front of them, heading toward the dungeons. Her fingers closed automatically around the small piece of paper he'd pressed into her palm, clutching it silently as they walked, and stuffing it quickly into the pocket of her robes, to inspect later.

When they made their way to the common room, Hermione sat heavily in a chair next to the fire, her friends surrounding her, and Ginny sitting next to her. She pulled the slip of parchment out of her pocket, and pulled a book from her bag to hide it in, opening the book for cover, and unfolding the note inside.

The empty classroom, after dinner.

She knew he'd meant the one in the dungeons, where he'd opened up to her. She wondered if he wanted to talk, or if he wanted to get rid of spare energy, hoping it was both. She balled the paper up and threw it casually into the fire, turning her head back to the book, to distract herself until dinner.

Draco slid silently into the classroom, having fallen behind the rest of the Slytherins heading back to their dungeon. He sat at one of the desks, waiting for her to arrive, and staring at his hands.

The creaking of the door announced her arrival a few minutes later, bringing his attention to the figure coming towards him.

"Need help with your homework, Malfoy?" She asked coolly, sitting in the chair next to him.

"I've already finished it, Granger. Bet Potter and Weasley can't say the same, though." He said, standing from his chair, and circling behind her.

"You're probably right. And I suppose they'll need my help, then." She stood, as if to go to her friends, but was stopped short by his hands around her waist.

"I have something else I need your help with..." He growled in her ear playfully, turning her to face him. He could see the humored sparkle in her eyes in the torchlight, and leaned in, touching his lips gently to hers, appreciating how easily her arms wrapped around his shoulders, and how readily she kissed him back.

He didn't want to admit how much he'd missed this. The closeness, being able to at least see her every day, even if he couldn't always talk to her. His father had made terrible company in comparison, and his mother had been far too inquisitive. Hermione was warm, and seemed to be just as eager to see him as he had been.

"How was your holiday, Hermione?" He asked softly, using her name like a caress.

"It was pleasant. My parents and I traveled to Italy, so it wasn't dull, but it was... Lacking," she finished, squinting at the word as though it weren't quite right. "Yours?"

"Same as always. Terrible." He said, shrugging, and trying not to think about it. It'd been especially terrible this year, but he wasn't sure she would understand.

"It's always terrible?" She asked, frowning, and cocking her head to the side.

"Well, the gifts are rather superb, but... The family part is always unpleasant." He said, recalling past christmases with a larger family. Those had been even worse.

"I thought you liked your mum and dad." Hermione frowned harder, not letting him brush the past off as easily as he'd like. He sighed, and pulled slightly away, looking into her face better.

"Do you really want to know about that?" He asked, making a face to express just how fun of a topic it would be.

"Yes." Hermione replied without hesitation, her eyes widening with interest.

"She's actually interested in me..." Draco thought, absorbing the details of her face, and marveling in the interest. He pulled out his wand, and barred the door from passerby, before pulling Hermione toward an empty desk, and sitting down in a chair heavily, weighed down by thoughts of his family.

"I told my mother about us." He said, his stomach tightening into a knot as he watched Hermione's reaction, hoping she didn't laugh at him, or worse.

"In the abstract, or...?" Hermione prompted, leaning against the desk in front of him, listening as though it were a lesson from a professor.

"As much as was tasteful," he said, giving her a knowing grin. "Nothing too intimate, but she knows we're... Intimate," he said, sticking with the gentle word. "I told her how I felt..." He cringed away from that memory, refusing to admit he'd blurted to his mother more than he'd told Granger, herself. "She wasn't even disappointed," he said, shrugging. "She promised not to tell my father, though. He would be furious." Draco said, absently twisting a ring around his finger.

"That doesn't sound like an awful holiday." Hermione said, prompting him to continue when he paused too long.

"My mother is usually fine, until she gets too curious, or overprotective..." He said, making another face. "It's my father that usually ruins the holidays for me. Especially this year. He kept going on about blood purity, and... All I could think about was you," Draco admitted, his face fell into a downcast scowl. "I used to admire him. After this, though..." He gestured to the air between them, "I couldn't listen to him talk without wanting to shout at him." Hermione looked at him sadly, understanding his anger.

"He seemed more childish than anything." Draco said bitterly, twisting the ring angrily on his finger.

"What's that?" Hermione asked, staring at his hands, noticing the fidgeting.

"Nothing." He said tiredly, clasping one hand over the other, and hiding the ring.

"Draco, don't." Her voice was stern, and he stared into her brown eyes, taking comfort from the kindness in them.

"My father gave it to me." He said, pulling the ring from his slim finger, and holding it out for her to inspect. Her fingers were soft against his as she took the ring from him, holding it up to her face in the dim light.

"If father could see us now..." He thought, staring at the muggle-born girl holding his family crest. She was probably the first non-pureblood to touch it, ever.

"It's the Malfoy family crest," he said, holding out his hand for her to drop it back into, and slid it back onto his index finger. "He went into a big speech when he gave it to me." He said, remembering how the speech had set his nerves on edge. He'd tuned it out, thinking of brown eyes, and soft skin.

"He'd said quite a few things about the responsibility of our lineage, carrying on the name, et cetera." Draco scoffed, and stared hatefully at the ring. It was a reminder for him of every disappointment he'd been to his father, and the future disappointment he seemed destined to inflict. Perhaps the Malfoy name would die out with Draco himself.

"You were right, Granger. In potions, when you said my blood is evil." He stared at the floor, feeling tainted, and foul.

Hermione stared at the top of his blond head, her features scrunched into a confused scowl. She barely remembered saying it to him, and she felt her heart wrench with regret. The mood had changed so completely, from the fluttering in her stomach when he'd said he'd told his mother about them, to the feeling of her innards falling a mile as he sat there, morose, and broken.

"I'm sorry I said that," Hermione said, sitting in the chair next to him. "I don't think it's true. Not anymore, anyhow," she said, knowing she'd believed it at the time. "I've seen you change, Draco. The past couple months, you've been different. You can be different, and you're trying. That proves it's not your blood, it's just poor upbringing." She said the last with a note of harshness, wondering how anyone could teach their child to hate so completely.

"What if you're wrong? What if I'm destined to be like my father, and grandfather, and everyone else in my family?" He said, looking at her with a face so full of anger she pulled back.

"Do you want to be like them?" Hermione asked, staring steadily into his watery eyes. He was on the verge of tears from how badly his family legacy was hurting him, and she couldn't stand to see him suffer any longer.

"No." He replied, his face twisting with discomfort as he said it, unsure of himself.

"Then don't be. You're free to make your own choices. So make choices that are different from theirs. You've already started, you just have to keep going, and get a little closer to who you do want to be every day." She said matter-of-factly. It wouldn't be easy for him, but she believed he

could do it if he really wanted to. He looked hopeful, his eyes still shining with worried tears, but the way he looked at her made her squirm with discomfort.

Draco hoped she was right, and she looked so convinced, he couldn't help believing her. He would change, for her. He would prove her right, and prove his father wrong.

"Thank you, Hermione," he said, feeling embarrassed by the tears in his eyes, and suddenly childish for his capriciousness. "I'm sorry for acting like a baby."

"You're not." She replied, smiling at him in a way that made his stomach flip. He slid from his chair, kneeling on the ground next to her, and wrapped his arms around her waist, pressing his face into her stomach. Her arms folded around his shoulders and head, silently comforting the distraught boy. He breathed in the scent of her, a different smell than the hogwarts bathwater she used. It was sweeter, with a note of citrus to the floral bouquet.

"What did you do in Italy?" Draco asked, mumbling the question into her shirt.

"Sorry?" She asked, unable to decipher his words.

"What did you and your parents do in Italy?" He lifted his head to ask, but placed it right back when he'd finished, closing his eyes to listen to her answer.

"Oh. We went to Milan for a few days, visited a few museums, and Sempione Park, lovely place. Then we went to Rome for a week, and toured the city. I tried to throw a muggle coin into every fountain we passed, but I ran out of coins on the first day. We saw the Sistine Chapel, the Colosseum, the Pantheon, so many places I can hardly recall."

"What'd you do for the rest of the holiday?" He asked, tilting his head away so she could hear.

"Well, we had to travel to Italy, and Muggle's can't travel by Apparition, or Floo Powder, so it took up quite a bit of time. I spent about three days at home, though, for Christmas."

"What's it like?" He remembered her telling him of how different muggle bathrooms were from those in his own house, and wondered just how differently she lived when she wasn't at Hogwarts.

"My home?" She seemed surprised by this question, and he nodded into her belly, ignoring the ache beginning in his knees as he knelt in front of her. "Well, it's rather small, since it's just the three of us. There's two bedrooms, and an office. We have a kitchen, a living room, and just one bathroom," she sat up straighter, and leaned around him, jostling his hold on her as she reached into her bag. "I brought a muggle magazine." She said, pulling it out of her bag. Draco pulled away from his embrace, and took the offered booklet, sitting back in his chair as he inspected it.

"What's wrong with the pictures?" He said, poking at one still-life, and flipping a page to inspect another.

"Muggle pictures don't move." She explained, watching him look through the magazine.

"What's this?" He asked, pointing to a picture.

"That's a washing machine. You put clothes and soap in, and it washes your clothes for you." He opened his mouth to mention his family's house-elf, but decided against it, reminded by the button pinned to her bag that she didn't care for house-elf treatment.

"How about this one?" He pointed to another still image, frowning at the picture, and tilting his head back and forth, hoping to make sense of it.

"That's a child's bath toy," She said, inspecting the duck-boat. "They come up with all sorts of silly things."

"Muggle children play in the bath?" He asked, looking up into her frowning face.

"Wizard children do, too." She said, looking confused. "You didn't?"

"No. The bath we had together was the first bath I've had fun in. Usually it's either washing, or relaxing."

"Did your parents allow you to play at all as a child?" Hermione asked, irritated.

"Yes. I had a playroom, and everything I wanted. Except when I was in lessons." She nodded, understanding early lessons, and leaned on the table, staring absently into the magazine as he turned pages.

He absorbed the images of the muggle world, staring in awe as he read descriptions beneath appliances, inspected happily smiling children, and whimsical adults. By the time he'd reached the last page of the booklet, he couldn't form words to describe what he was feeling. He stared blankly at the last page, letting his new understanding sink in. The muggles had found ingenious ways around their lack of magic, almost like a magic of their own.

"Hermione... You grew up with all of this?" He asked, marveling for the first time at how difficult the transition into a witch's life must've been for her.

"Well, yes. But it wasn't so bad without magic. Just different. It was a good childhood." She said, staring almost wistfully down at the glossy pages, as he stared amazedly at her.

"I envy you." The words slipped out of his mouth before he could stop them, and he blushed pink in the torchlight as she looked up at him, curious.

"Envy me? I can't imagine your childhood was that unfortunate, spoiled brat that you are." She teased, her lips lifting in a smile. He wasn't thinking, just moving, leaning across the small expanse between them, pressing his lips to hers gently, lifting a hand to brush her hair aside, and cup her face.

Hermione kissed him back happily, her lips parting slightly under his in anticipation, one hand balling into a fist in her lap, the other resting on his shoulder familiarly. Draco could feel her eagerness, and deepened the kiss, capturing her lips between his own, and pulling her from her chair, to the floor. She sprawled underneath him, her hands clutching his shoulders, her legs tangling with his.

He tangled his fingers in her thick brown hair, kissing his way down her throat, pulling her robes up with one hand. She helped him to remove her clothing, lifting her black robes over her head,

and unclasping the white bra she wore, kicking her shoes off as he pulled down her matching panties, and kissing his way down her legs, touching as much of her soft skin as he could.

When she lay naked underneath him, he moved back up to kiss her, kicking his own shoes off, and pulling impatiently at his own robes, undressing hastily as he slid against her, pressing into her, and kissing her in a slow, mesmerising way. She welcomed him readily, kissing back in a greedy manner, grabbing at his hair, shoulders, and arms.

He entered her slowly, like their first time, staring into her eyes as he filled her, watching her pleasure fill her face. Her breath caught in her throat when he settled deep within her, stopping his hips in place, to stay inside her. Being near her made him forget how unhappy his family was. Being with her like this, he couldn't even recall anything outside of her brown eyes, warm skin, or flushed face.

"Having trouble?" Hermione grinned up at him as he stared down at her, her voice teasing, her hips wiggling against his, inviting his own movement. He felt the words stick in his throat, and lay against her, burying his face in her hair, hiding the swell of feelings she invoked, and moved swiftly to distract her. Her voice came out in a soft moan as he jerked his hips back and forth, her back arched against him as he slid slowly in and out of her. He squeezed his eyes closed, breathing in the scent of her hair, taking in the unfamiliar shampoo scent overlaying the smell of her skin. He loved the way she smelled, the way she felt, the sound of her voice.

Hermione closed her eyes, enjoying the slow warmth of him on top of her. She moved her hips in time with his. She could hear her own moans, but couldn't stop them, they kept coming out as though they were a part of her breathing.

Soft lips pressed into hers, kissing gently, moving at the same slow pace as their sex, making her feel giddy, and relaxed all at once. Draco's hands on her were still, unmoving as he held her, and as she kissed him back, she realized that he felt differently. He felt calmer, more patient than usual, and worlds more gentle. He wasn't speeding up, or thrusting harder, he was staying slow, tender, unlike their usual jaunts into each other's fantasies. Loving.

The word that popped into her head surprised her into stillness beneath him, and she opened her eyes, staring into confused silver orbs, wondering which of them the word fit. Was today different because she felt differently, or because he did?

"What's wrong, Hermione?" He asked, looking stunned that she'd gone so still. She stared up into his confused look, the worry in them, and smiled knowingly.

"Nothing. Absolutely nothing is wrong." She said, lifting her head to meet his lips in an intense kiss, leaving him confused, but unworried as she showed him just how much she was enjoying him. Hermione pulled his face back down level with hers, so she could whisper in his ear as he resumed thrusting slowly into her.

"I love this..." She panted closing her eyes to lose herself in the sensation of their mingling skin. It was familiar, and exciting, her body moving against him on its own, while she absorbed the feeling of his bare skin, the smell of his hair, the sound of his breath against her neck as he kissed gently in response to her words.

If she hadn't been lying on a cold stone floor, she would almost call it romantic, the way Draco held her tightly to him, the delicate way he kissed along her jaw, the slow way he made love to

her, alone in their own world.

Draco felt himself edging closer to orgasm, each unhurried thrust pushing him an inch closer. He paused, shifting his legs, pulling away, and taking her with him as he sat up and pulled her on top of him. She followed his guiding hands easily, curling her legs underneath her, and straddling him as he lay all the way back, letting her take the lead.

She took only a moment to adjust comfortably on top of him, and as she began moving her hips over his, he slid a hand between them, rubbing her toward a swift climax. He stared up at her as she braced her hands on his chest, her head dipping as her mouth gasped for air, and her whole body began to twitch slightly over him, her walls squeezing all round him,

"I love you." It's barely a whisper of his breath against her skin, but it made her heart pound harder in her chest, her breath catch in her throat, and her body tense against him with surprise. She kept her eyes closed, and clutched him tighter to her, letting the confession sink in, the heat from his words seeping through her, echoed inside her own head.

Draco felt her surprise as though he could read her mind, her body so expressive that he paused to take in the look on her face for a second, trying to read her reaction. He wouldn't blame her if she found his admission offensive; he didn't even think he had a right to feel the way he did, but he DID feel she deserved to know, nonetheless.

He held in the urge to apologize, refusing to take the words back. Instead, he pushed them into her, one slow stroke after another, letting his emotions flow to her, sharing it between them, and making the connection more solid as she returned his every movement. He kissed her again, letting his lips add more of his thoughts to the mix, kissing her delicately, running his hands softly down her body. She responded playfully, nipping at his lower lip, and sifting her fingers through his hair, tugging slightly at his scalp, as she slid back and forth against his hips.

He groaned against her lips, relishing the sensations of her hands and mouth on him, and her obvious eagerness at his confession. Instead of offensive, she seemed to find it inspiring, and was using her new inspiration to torture Draco until he couldn't think anymore. His fingers dug desperately into her thighs, his face twisting with enthrallment, as he forgot about his apprehensions, and his trying to be gentle, and charming. She stole his thoughts away, and left only his need for her, warping his moan into a soft growl as his careful restraint unhinged.

Draco held her to him, and thrust upward, hard, fast, and wild, his eyes rolling shut, and his fingers pulling her hair back, and forcing her to arch into him. Her voice caught in a high pitched whimper, encouraging him to go further, biting at her arched neck, and rolling her over, regaining his position of free-movement. He used his weight to thrust harder, making her curl against him, and mewl with uncontrolled bliss.

He was sweaty and shaky by the time he finished, his muscles feeling like electrified jam, his breath almost painful in his throat. He held Hermione to his chest, her panting breath cooling his sweat-slicked skin. He kept his eyes closed, trying to force his arms to stop shaking, and slow his heartbeat back to a safe rhythm as Hermione's finger traced patterns across his chest and stomach.

Hermione lay against him, catching her breath, and tracing the lines of his muscles, his pale skin hot, and his chest moving rapidly with his needy lungs. His fingers trembled slightly against her shoulder, betraying his exhaustion, and making her smile into his ribcage. She'd gone

beyond shaking, and couldn't bring herself to move more than her fingers, too spent to care about lying on the floor, or curfews. Her eyes were trying to drift shut, and she fought to stay awake. The only thing imperfect in her small, isolated world was her stomach. After a few moments of being still, it'd decided to start twisting uncomfortably with hunger, reminding her of how little she'd eaten at dinner, too nervous to be hungry. Her nerves were relaxed, but her hunger had caught up, and tripled. She tried to ignore it, and kept gently stroking the lines of his chest, forcing her eyes back open every time she blinked.

"Hermione..." She grinned at the way her name sounded in his voice, warm, and adoring. "Would you like to sneak to the kitchens? You sound like you're starving." Hermione felt her whole face burn with embarrassment as her stomach growled again, audible to them both.

"I'm fine..." She mumbled, ducking her face to hide the blush spreading across it.

"Well, I'm hungry, so I think I'll go anyway. You're welcome to come along if you like, of course." Draco said teasingly, slowly sitting up, still cradling her to his chest. She kept her face down, hidden by her hair, and nodded silently, hating how her stomach kept making noise. She and Draco slowly stood, helping one another to their feet, and pulling their robes on. She noticed how Draco leaned heavily on the table as he pulled his robes over his head, his legs still a bit shaky as he redressed.

"Are you okay, Draco?" She asked, her fading blush returning as his name slid off her tongue. His earlier confession still lingered in her mind, tinting all her words with that extra knowledge.

"I'm great. Just a bit tired. I should be fine once we start walking." He said with a self-assured grin. She grinned back, and took his hand, using her other to unlock the door. They walked hand in hand down the deserted corridor, silent and wary. It was at least an hour past bedtime, and they knew that Filch wasn't the only one prowling the corridors, looking for students out of bed.

A/N: I'm so sorry for missing last night, guys! Have this long chapter to make up for it! <3

Chapter 21: A First Kiss

To Hermione's surprise, Malfoy seemed to know exactly where the kitchens were, and how to get in, making her wonder if any of the school's secrets were really secret.

"Fancy anything in particular?" His smooth voice asked as the house elves bustled around them busily, offering tea, and scones, seeming oblivious to the hour, or their delinquency.

"Whatever's easy." She said, feeling a wash of guilt for making the elves work extra so late at night. Harry's friend, Dobby was hanging back a bit, eyeing Malfoy warily, as though worried he was going to be punished. She looked over at Draco, worried, and wondering what sort of things he'd done in the past when he'd come to the kitchens. Their eyes met, and she saw in his eyes something that surprised her. Guilt.

"What's wrong, Draco?" She asked, the name feeling strange on her tongue in such a mundane setting.

"There's something I have to do. Give me a moment?" He asked, looking apologetic, and giving her hand a squeeze, before stepping carefully through the crowd of tray-holding elves, toward the only one hanging back.

"Dobby, may I have a word?" She heard him ask, approaching the small, bat-eared elf, to lead him away from the small army of food-bearing servants that surrounded Hermione. She watched from too far to hear their conversation as he knelt down, to look the elf in his eyes. She plucked a sandwich off an offered tray, and slid onto a stool, nibbling at the sandwich as she watched the blond and the elf talk for a while. When Draco finally stood up, and turned back to her, his face was bright red, and Dobby looked to have tears forming in his eyes.

Draco shuffled back toward Hermione, not quite meeting her eyes, and sat next to her, accepting an offered tray of tea and biscuits.

"What was that about?" She asked, remembering belatedly that the elf had used to work for his family.

"Dobby belonged to my family years ago. I wanted to apologize for how he'd been treated. I think I'm beginning to see how many people we purebloods have really abused." He said, with a grimace, and a mumbled 'thank you' to another house elf that brought over more sandwiches.

"Were you terrible to him?" She asked, morbidly curious. Remembering the stories Harry had told her in their second year.

"Oh, yes. My parents were worse, but I tried so hard to be like them, to be superior. I never really thought about it until recently. We have another house-elf, you know. I've been trying to be decent to him, but... Sometimes I forget, and say something cruel." The guilt on Draco's face was nearly painful, and Hermione took his hand, giving him an encouraging smile.

"Just keep reminding yourself to be kind. And to apologize when you're not." She added, sternly. He ducked his head in acknowledgement, his cheeks still blazing red. She could see the discomfort written all over his face, and felt hope for his future. He'd proven that he could change, and looking at his guilty face, she felt a swell of pride for him.

"Draco..." She said, trying to pull the conversation in a lighter direction. "My parents know about us too. Except..." She felt her stomach twist with nerves. "I had to tell them that we're... Dating." She glanced up at his surprised face. He'd said he loved her earlier, but she wasn't sure how he'd feel about the idea of commitment, even a fake one. Was it over the invisible line that still separated them? She rushed to explain, before his face could betray his thoughts.

"They saw the hickies you left," She gave him a playfully accusing glare, "And I had to tell them something, otherwise they'd have thought all sorts of awful things... Though, they probably wouldn't have been too far off from the truth..." She finished, with a wicked grin. Draco grinned back, his eyes narrowing with thought. He stared at her for a minute, collecting his thoughts, and deciding how to reply.

"D'you know, my mother asked the same thing, when I told her about us, and I didn't even think to just tell her yes. I just sort of... Blurted that you were muggleborn, top of the class, and that I was fairly certain I was falling for you. Do you know what she said?" He didn't give her a chance to guess, instead smirking at the memory and relating her words. "She said, 'Of course you are, Malfoy men have always gone for intelligent women.'" He laughed at his mother's own self-

praise, and Hermione found herself laughing with him. She laughed harder, realizing how very strange the situation was. Here she was, drinking tea with Draco Malfoy, laughing over their parent's reactions to their relationship. It was surreal, and as she sat there giggling, she realized she rather liked being friends with him. Besides his occasional self-hatred, and life-changing meltdowns, he was enjoyable company, even when there wasn't lust compelling the conversation. Her giggles died down, and she looked at him for a moment, a slap-happy smile on her face, feeling a sudden wrench of panic in her chest. He was more to her than just good sex, and witty banter.

"I think I might be falling in love with you, too." She admitted quietly, her stomach flipping as she forced the words out.

She hadn't even admitted similar feelings to Ron, but sitting here, next to the silver and platinum of her new friend, she felt compelled to be as brave and honest as he'd been. She stared into the gleaming silver orbs as they came closer, his face so close she could feel the warmth coming from his skin.

He kissed her delicately, his fingers brushing her jaw, his eyes closing as he parted his lips. She kissed him back, moving her lips slowly against his, letting him set the pace, and depth of the kiss. It was a much more hesitant kiss, filled with emotional longing, instead of sexual need, and her heart felt as though it would beat right through her ribcage, her stomach fluttering as though filled with pixies.

Draco traced her cheek with his fingers, his heart hammering uncomfortably as he kissed her, half of him reveling in the fact that she'd said she might love him, the other half waiting for her to laugh at him, and ask if he was seriously stupid enough to believe that. Her mouth was soft, warm, and undemanding, simply enjoying the kiss they shared, not expecting anything after. Just a kiss.

But so much more than just a simple kiss. It was an anxiously hopeful bolt of lightning that shot straight through him, lighting up his soul, and twisting his stomach into knots. It was a wave of relief with every second she didn't pull away. It was the first time he'd acted on a feeling stronger than hatred, fear, or lust. It was frightening, and new. It was exciting in a different way.

He pulled away, taking in a deep, shaky breath, his lips curling up into a smile on their own, and a breath of nervous laughter leaving his throat as he exhaled. Hermione's eyes were sparkling, and she was smiling at him, her cheeks pink, and her eyes wandering over his features as though looking at him for the first time.

"You act like that was your first kiss, Draco." Hermione teased, turning her happy face away and hiding it behind her hair as she picked up another snack to nibble on.

"It was my first kiss like that." He admitted, his face burning. He'd kissed plenty of girls, but none of them had been for any reason beyond sexual desire.

"Really?" Hermione's eyes were curious as she glanced back at him for a moment, her words muffled around a bite of food.

"Yeah, I've never... Felt this way before..." He announced, feeling his face practically catch fire with embarrassment. He didn't meet her gaze, instead, staring at the countertop, trying to force his blush away.

“Hm. Draco Malfoy: will do all manner of deviant things without a hint of shame, but gets bashful over emotions.” She teased him, poking a finger into his arm playfully, grinning at him.

Draco grinned back, his cheeks burning, but his mind calm, and positive. He didn’t know exactly what he wanted for his future, but he felt like he had a chance of getting it, whatever it was.

A/N: FLUFF FOR YOU! AND FLUFF FOR YOU! FLUFF FOR EVERYONE! Please drop a review if you like it so far, or if there's something you think I could improve!

Chapter 22: Into the Light

Hermione woke the next morning, grinning at the heavy curtains of her four-poster, and reliving the previous night. Her stomach twisted with anxiety about where she and Draco would stand in the light of day, but the grin refused to slip from her face. Even though it was a secret, she knew that they were something more than they had been yesterday morning.

She pulled her curtains back, and dressed for the day in a daze, her mind lost in a jumble of memories, and mental reviews of the homework that was due that day. She bounced down the stairs to breakfast, not waiting for anyone to accompany her on her walk, preferring to think in peace. She quickly sorted through her different feelings the night before, and tried to push the secret down, focusing on the three essays that were due. She recalled them word for word, and went over them each, twice, as she tucked into a plate of eggs and bacon.

She didn’t hear the whispers that followed her down the Great Hall, or see the heads turning to stare as she ate.

“Hermione, I swear it wasn’t me.” She looked up to see Ginny taking a seat next to her, looking worried, and casting glares at anyone who dared look their way.

“What wasn’t you, Gin?” She asked following one of her glares to the table of Slytherins. Pansy Parkinson seemed to be giving her a death glare. She looked back to Ginny confused. “What’s happened?”

“Someone spread a rumor that you and Malfoy are seeing each other. You haven’t heard them talking?” Ginny asked, bewildered. Hermione kept her gaze on her friend as she listened beyond their conversation, hearing words from whispered exchanges.

“Granger and Malfoy...”

“Heard they were snogging...”

“I heard they...”

Hermione’s eyes widened in disbelief.

“But... Who?” She looked wildly around, searching for the grey eyes that would answer the worry that popped into her mind. Had he told?

Draco Malfoy was nowhere to be seen, his usual spot at the Slytherin table was vacant. Hermione looked back to Ginny.

"I don't know who, but most of the school's heard by now. What are you going to do? Are you going to deny it, or...?" She trailed off, shooting another glare in the direction of a few staring Hufflepuffs.

"I... I don't know," Hermione thought of the previous night. "I'm not sure what he'll want to do, either..." Ginny gave her an appraising look.

"Something happened?"

"Sort of..."

"Out with it!" Ginny looked excited, and tense.

"Well... We... Talked." Hermione hedged. Her friend's steely gaze told her she wasn't getting away that easily. She pulled out her wand, and practiced her non-verbal spellcasting on those around them, muffling the conversation to any eavesdroppers.

"Before holiday, we spent the night together, and he said some really nice things, and gave me horrible hickeys. MY parents saw them, so I just... Told them that we're dating. And apparently he told his mother that he's... Falling in love with me." She let the words sink in, watching Ginny's face transform from disbelief, into shock.

"He didn't." She shook her head.

"And he told me outright, last night. Sort of... slipped out as we..." She let the insinuation hang there for a moment, then continued. "Anyway, then we snuck to the kitchens, and I saw him do something, Ginny. Something he never would have done before. He apologized to a house elf. He said 'please' and 'thank you'. He's really changing, Ginny. And I... told him I might feel the same as him." She felt her face flush with embarrassment, and wouldn't meet her friend's eyes.

"You... you really like him, then?" Ginny asked, "More than just sex?"

Hermione nodded mutely, feeling guilt at the admission. She knew that he'd changed, but no one else did. All her friends would see was Malfoy, the selfish, whiny prat.

"Well, I guess you need to talk to him, then, and figure out what your story's going to be, because I'm willing to bet money on someone asking about it before the day's over."

"I can't just walk up to him in front of everyone and ask for a word!" Hermione hissed back.

"So send him notes, spell it onto the damned table if you have to." Ginny said, sounding fierce. She'd decided to stand by her friend, and Hermione could see the fire in her eyes to help, even if no one else would.

"Thank you, Ginny. I don't know where I'd be without you." She said, offering a grateful smile.

"Not a problem. If you need me to, I can hex him, so he ends up in the hospital wing. That should give you a bit of privacy."

"No thanks. I think I can manage." Hermione said quickly. "I think I'll go see if I can catch him coming into breakfast. He's not here yet, so he should be coming up soon." She pushed away from her unfinished food, and stalked past the whispers, holding her head high, and pretending she couldn't hear them.

She'd made it to the Entrance Hall, and was passing the stairs, when something shot past her ear. She spun, pulling out her wand reflexively. Pansy was sauntering toward her, wand raised, a sneer on her face.

"Did you just try to hex me?" Hermione asked astounded. Pansy gave a short bark of laughter, and sent another hex toward her. Hermione blocked it, and took a step back, narrowing her eyes. She could jinx Parkinson back, and get detention, or keep blocking, until a teacher came past.

"What's going on?" The cold voice from behind her made her heart race. She kept her eyes on Pansy's wand, seeing the blond step up in her peripheral.

"She's been spreading nasty rumors, Draco." Pansy simpered, pouting at her housemate.

"I've done no such thing!" Hermione argued, glaring at the pug-faced witch.

"Liar!" Pansy shouted across the hall, raising her wand another few inches, pointing it at Hermione's head.

"What kind of rumors?" Draco said, looking shrewdly back and forth between the girls. Hermione didn't dare look away from the angry witch to see Draco's expression.

"She's been telling people that you two were snogging, and, and... Fooling around before Christmas!" Pansy half shouted, her face red, her hand shaking with anger. Hermione couldn't stop the guilty blush that crept up her cheeks.

"That's stupid. Why would she spread those sort of rumors about herself, Pansy?" Draco said, sounding mean. Hermione glanced at him briefly, seeing the annoyance on his face. Was he annoyed with Pansy, or the rumors? She looked back at Parkinson, seeing something in her face as she looked from Draco to Hermione and back.

"Is it true?" She asked, her voice low, and dangerously quiet.

"It is true." The confirmation came from neither involved party, but from the doors to the Great Hall. Hermione took the moment that Pansy was looking over her shoulder to glance at the speaker as well.

"Cormac?" She looked at him in confusion.

"I saw it myself." He said, glaring at her angrily.

"Saw what?" Hermione asked, half for confirmation, half in denial.

"I saw you and him." McLaggen spat, nodding toward Draco. A flash of red caught her eye, and she saw Ginny coming through the doorway, wand in hand, ready to jump in in an instant, but

unnoticed by McLaggen, or Pansy.

Pansy's arm had sagged, her wand pointed at the ground as everyone stared at McLaggen.

"I saw you leave Slughorn's party together, so I followed you. Took me a bit to find you in that classroom, but when I did..." He shook his head in disgust. "You snubbed me all night, but then you let that touch you?" He said with a jerk of his hand toward Malfoy.

Hermione's eyes shot from McLaggen to Draco. "This has to be a dream... This can't be happening... We warded the door, didn't we?" She thought to herself, unable to recall either of them actually casting spells on the door. She scrutinized Draco's expression. Was he going to deny what McLaggen had said?

Draco met her eyes for a moment, searching her face for something. His face set in a determined scowl, and he turned back to McLaggen.

"Are you jealous that she didn't want you?" Draco asked scathingly, eyes narrowed dangerously. Hermione could see his hand hidden in his pocket, already holding his wand.

"Jealous? Of you? Not a chance, Malfoy." McLaggen spat back, turning his sneer to Hermione. "I just thought everyone else should know what kind of a slag she is."

The words had barely left his mouth before hexes went flying. Draco, Hermione, and Ginny all sent hexes at McLaggen, Pansy sent a hex at Hermione, and McLaggen's wand was raised to ward off the hex he'd been anticipating from Hermione, when he got hit with the other two.

Draco's jinx hit McLaggen's stomach, making him double over, being sick all over his own shoes. Ginny's Bat-Bogey Hex met its target, and McLaggen's face sprouted flapping black wings as he stumbled back, howling with surprise, vomit still dribbling down his chin. The hex he'd managed to deflect had hit Pansy, and she flew backward as the force of it hit her in the face, producing large ugly boils across her skin. Her own hex had managed to hit Hermione right in the chest, and made her swell like a balloon, falling forward as her body expanded, leaving her off balance.

"What is going on here?!" The harsh tones of Professor McGonagall entering the scene made things a hundred times worse.

Hermione could barely turn her head, her eyes searching what she could see of the Entrance Hall for her Head of House.

Draco and Ginny both started talking at once, trying to talk over each other in an attempt to get out of trouble, and place the blame elsewhere. Pansy had her hands over her tender face, sobs of pain coming from her as she tried to hide her disfigurement. McLaggen opened his mouth to join the frenzy of finger-pointing, but ended up being sick again, splashing the floor with more mess. Hermione shrieked wordlessly in disgust as her bloated body tried to roll toward the filth.

"ENOUGH!" McGonagall shouted over the pandemonium as Ginny and Draco both grabbed for Hermione's pudgy flailing arms to keep her from rolling into McLaggen's line of fire as he spewed again, the black wings flapping noisily on his face as he groaned, and spat up.

"Parkinson, McLaggen, get yourselves to the hospital wing, now." McGonagall sounded livid,

and the two began their ascent up the stairs, Pansy still crying, and McLaggen releasing a fountain of puke every so often.

“Step aside, you two.” She ordered. Ginny and Draco released Hermione’s arms leaving her to roll for a second before McGonagall raised her wand, levitating the bloated girl into the air.

“I expect you two to wait in my office while I take Miss Granger to the Hospital Wing.” She marched off, leaving Draco and Ginny staring at her back, as the bobbing Hermione floated ahead of her.

“Everyone’s going to know about you two, now.” Weasley said, sitting uncomfortably in a chair in McGonagall’s office, not bothering to look over at Draco. He stared at her for a moment, and nodded.

“I know.” He said somberly.

“What are you going to do about it?” she asked, finally meeting his eyes.

“Do about it?” He asked, and then shook his head. “I don’t know. Probably keep one eye over my shoulder for Weasley’s and Potter’s inevitable attempts to jinx me.” He said with a harsh laugh.

“I’m serious. Hermione really likes you, and if you end up hurting her, or getting her in trouble, I’ll jinx you.” Ginny threatened. “So, are you going to end things with her now, or try and be what she thinks you are?”

“What does she think I am?” Draco asked, eyebrows pulling together. Weasley stared him down for a moment before answering.

“She thinks you’ve changed.”

Draco sat in awe for a moment, taking in the truth. She’d told her friend that she liked him. That she thought he wasn’t who everyone believed him to be. The part of his mind that always whispered to him that he was still that mean little boy, still tainted by his father’s choices was silenced. Hermione truly felt something for him.

The door behind the pair opened, and McGonagall entered, her lips a thin white line, her eyes narrowed, shrewdly assessing the Gryffindor and Slytherin sitting at her desk. She strode silently past them, and took her seat, staring across the table at them.

“Well, what happened?” She asked, and then quickly added, “One at a time.” She gestured to Draco to start.

“I’m not sure how it started, but I came up for breakfast, and found Pansy and Granger holding their wands on each other. Pansy was upset, saying that Granger had been spreading rumors, and then McLaggen comes along, saying it was him that spread the rumors, and he said some pretty vulgar things, saying he’d witnessed me and Granger doing things alone together. Then he... He called her a...” He looked from the professor, to Ginny, then back. “He called her a ‘slag’. Then everyone tried to hex someone.” He said.

"Weasley?" McGonagall turned her piercing gaze on the redhead.

"He's right, Professor. McLaggen and Parkinson started it."

"Who hexed who?" She asked, pinching the bridge of her nose.

"Well, I think Hermione, Malfoy and I were all trying for McLaggen, and Parkinson was aiming for Hermione. Someone's curse hit Parkinson, not sure who." Ginny said with a shrug.

"Alright. I've heard the other's sides, and I've decided to give you all detentions. Friday, my office, eight o'clock sharp. You're dismissed, Weasley." The two made to stand up, before Draco realized she'd said 'Weasley'. He sank back into his chair, feeling ill. Ginny shot him a mildly sympathetic look as she left, leaving him even more confused. They seemed to be in some unspoken truce, for Hermione's benefit. Not friends, but she didn't seem to hate him the way he'd expected.

"Malfoy, I've heard three different accounts of what happened, and only yours, Grangers, and Weasley's match. Now, I've asked Granger and McLaggen, and would now like to hear from you how these rumors started." She laced her fingers together, and fixed him with an expectant gaze.

"Well, Professor, the way I understand it, Granger invited McLaggen to Professor Slughorn's Christmas party to get under the skin of Weasley. The brother, not the one who was just here. He was acting like an absolute troll, so I rescued Granger from his company, and we hid from him in a classroom down the hall. We didn't realize that he'd followed us, but apparently we didn't hide that well, because he... He said he watched at the door as Granger and I... Well, I'd rather not repeat what he said he witnessed."

"And is his account accurate?" She asked, her gaze pinning him to his chair.

"I... I'm not sure, Professor. I've no idea what rumors he's been spreading about her, and I don't know when exactly he found us, or how much truth he's put into his lies."

"Well, give me the truth then." McGonagall snapped, seeming peeved.

"Granger and I hid in the classroom, and I asked her for a dance, since we could still hear a bit of the music from the party..." He felt his face burning with the admission, quickly thinking about how much to tell her. Had Granger told her how far it'd gone? He doubted it.

"Then I... I kissed her." He said, turning his face down, his cheeks flaming. McGonagall said nothing, and he could feel her eyes on him, waiting for him to continue.

"We snogged a bit, and we chatted... and... I may have been a bit handsy when we kissed..." He put the proper amount of shame into his voice, hanging his head.

"A bit handsy?" the professor asked, sounding chastising.

"I know it was probably inappropriate behavior, but... I just... wasn't thinking..." He said, glancing up at her apologetically. If there was one thing he was sure he could do, it was twist a story to his benefit. Or to the disadvantage of a certain gossiping git.

"I'll let your head of house know about your inappropriate behavior, and he can determine a proper punishment."

"But I've already got detention!" He argued, shaking his head in disbelief.

"A detention for the scene this morning with the hexes." McGonagall countered, and pulled a bit of parchment to her, and began writing with harsh lines from her quill. "You're dismissed, Mr. Malfoy." He stood, and walked from her office numbly, waiting till he was halfway down the hall to let the grin spread across his face. He'd probably earned himself a second detention, but he cherished the thought of what McGonagall would do to McLaggen for spreading vulgar 'lies'. He made sure to get his smile off his face before he entered his first period class, looking sour at the prospect of detention, and gossip.

A/N: I don't feel like McLaggen got hit with enough hexes, but I think adding more might've been overkill. :/

Chapter 23: Out of the Frying Pan, into...

Draco entered the hospital wing, the evening light casting the room in a fiery orange light. He stood at the door a moment, taking in the scene.

Potter and the Weasley siblings were already surrounding Granger, with the blonde Miss Brown firmly attached to the male Weasley's arm, and looking as though she were ready to start whining at any moment. A few people were situated around McLaggen, listening as he whispered to them, everyone looking up briefly as Draco entered, only to huddle closer in their gossip conference. Pansy was lying in a bed, unconscious, but with a few of her female friends around her, one holding her hand, others whispering quietly. Draco slowly approached the bed surrounded by Slytherin girls.

"How is she?" He asked, looking down at the boil covered face of his hanger-on. The pustules had gone down quite a bit, but were still painfully red, and oozing.

"She's doing better. Madame Pomfrey gave her a potion to make her sleep, because she kept complaining about the pain." One of the girls answered, glancing up at him. He recognized the green eyes, and looked away, feeling suddenly embarrassed. She was one of the girls he'd slept with near the beginning of the school year, and he looked at the others, checking to make sure there were none others present. He looked back down at Pansy, and moved away, stopping at the foot of Hermione's bed. He said nothing, meeting her eyes, and giving her a small smile. She looked away, towards Ginny, and then her other two friends.

"Bugger off, Malfoy." The Weasley boy snarked at him, seeming to ignore the blonde barnacle suctioned to his side.

"Ron, don't." Hermione said hoarsely. Malfoy grimaced at the sound of her voice, knowing that speaking couldn't be comfortable for her after having her whole throat swollen out of control. She was back to her normal size, but seemed tired, and her voice made him wonder if there were other lasting effects of the hex.

"I've got homework to do, Won-won. Let's go." Brown practically wailed, tugging at the red-

head's arm. He looked from Hermione to the blonde, and then back.

"Okay." He gave in as she kept tugging his arm. He walked around the bed, glaring at Malfoy, and purposefully knocked his shoulder into the Slytherin, jarring Draco from his silence.

"Watch it, Weasel." He growled, narrowing his eyes, and glaring after the retreating pair.

"Don't stand in the way, git." He shot over his shoulder, following the tugging mass of complaints. Draco watched them leave before turning back to Hermione.

"Alright?" He asked her, searching her face for more than just her reaction to being blown up. He couldn't believe the Weasel had been tactless enough to bring his girlfriend along.

She nodded, her eyebrows pulling together in the middle, displaying the feelings she tried to hide.

"Want me to leave?" He asked, ignoring the glares from his black-haired nemesis. He wasn't here to fight with Potter, the prat would have to wait his turn.

Hermione shook her head, letting him know it was okay to stay. He moved closer, standing next to Weasley, and continued to stare down at her. Her deep brown eyes stared back and he saw the curiosity in them. She wanted to know something, but not badly enough to speak.

"Did McGonagall talk to you, too?" He asked, sticking to yes or no questions. She nodded.

"About what?" Potter asked, jumping in. Hermione shot him a glance that said 'mind your own business'.

"Did you tell her everything?"

A shake no.

"Potter hasn't heard yet?"

Another no.

"Heard what?" Potter asked, sounding frustrated with only knowing half the conversation. Ginny looked around at the three of them, sharing a look with Hermione, and giving the two boys an assessing gaze.

"There's a rumor going around about Granger and myself." Draco put in, giving Potter a challenging glare. The fire that caught in the green eyes made Draco wonder about Potter's feelings toward Hermione. "McLaggen started them." Draco said, keeping things concise. Potter's glare found the other occupant on their side of the room, and Draco read the aggression on his face.

"That's why they're all here." Draco gestured at everyone in the room.

"That lying prat!" Harry started, but Hermione's hand reached up, grabbing his wrist to keep him from storming over to the bed-ridden male. She met Draco's eyes, and nodded, encouraging him to go on.

"I earned myself another detention for telling McGonagall I got handsy, but swore McLaggen was lying about the rest." Hermione nodded with a smile.

"Me too." She croaked, grinning wickedly.

"Handsy?" Potter looked confused, looking around from Hermione, to Weasley, to Draco, and back to McLaggen. He looked furious, and flustered.

"Mind your own business, Potter." Draco voiced the look Hermione was giving the boy-who-lived.

"How about some dinner, Harry?" Ginny encouraged him to follow her away from the secretive duo, but he set his jaw, crossed his arms, and narrowed his eyes at Draco.

"Tell me what's going on." He demanded. Always nosey.

"They're shagging." Pansy called obtrusively across the room, hearing Potter's insistence. Potter's head spun around so fast that Draco thought his neck might've broken. He looked over to see Pansy's eyes wide open, and staring dead at him. He felt his stomach sink to his toes. The sleeping potion must've worn off while they were talking.

"I knew you slept around, Draco, but her?" She looked disgusted, and sickened, even through the boils on her face. "I didn't mind so much, but a mudblood?"

Hermione's two Gryffindor friends pulled their wands and aimed them at the Slytherin girl, daring her to say anything more about her. Draco looked down at Hermione, and saw a hurt look in her eyes. But she wasn't looking at Pansy. She was staring at Draco with a betrayed look. He ignored the two Gryffindors trying to intimidate his ex, and stared into her eyes, trying to figure out what had hurt her.

"You..." Her voice croaked as she stared at him, trying to get the words out. "You're dating Parkinson?" She asked, and he looked from the still-whining Slytherin to his Gryffindor lover. He saw what she did for a moment. The same thing that'd happened to her with Ron, she was worried had happened to him and Pansy.

"No." He said quietly, shaking his head. "She's just obsessed. I haven't dated her since fifth year, and I haven't slept with her since before you." He said in a low voice, hoping to make her understand without Potter hearing. She was looking at him distrustfully, and he saw vulnerability in her eyes. She wanted to believe him, but Weasley had made her doubtful.

"I meant what I said last night, Granger," He said, calming his expression, hiding from her how his stomach was flipping, and his heart was clenching painfully. He put on his usual unaffected smirk, pretending he wasn't worried by how things would end up. "I don't care if anyone else knows. You can tell them all, if you'd like." He said, reaching out his fingertips to brush against the back of her hand while Potter was distracted.

Hermione stared dubiously at Malfoy, enjoying the brush of his fingers on her hand. His smirk was familiar, but she could read the fear underneath it. He'd just jumped from an emotional cliff, and was hiding behind his usual facade, trying to appear as though he was unbothered by the thought of being publicly outed. She stared hard at him, trying to read beyond his mask, and the

underlying fear. Was he really okay with everyone knowing? Was she?

The row between the Slytherins and her friends was getting noisier, and she glanced away from the grey eyes for a moment, assessing the scene.

Pansy was sitting up in bed, shouting insults at Harry and Ginny, her gaggle of friends surrounding her, all yelling back and forth.

"What's all this about?!" The shout had everyone silent in an instant. Madam Pomfrey had come out of her office at the ruckus, and was staring in horror at the scene that had unfolded.

"Out! All of you, OUT!" She shouted, shooing the group of Slytherin girls, Harry, and Ginny from the room, berating them for trying to start a fight with the suffering patients.

Hermione watched her friends get shuffled out, and Madame Pomfrey come back, and pull the curtains around Pansy's bed, administering another dose of sleeping draught. She finally turned back to Malfoy, who still stood next to her, his hand on hers, his face pale, but still set in his protective pretense.

"Why does he get to stay?" McLaggen groaned, nodding toward Malfoy, his own friends still around him.

"Would you prefer I remove everyone?" Madame Pomfrey threatened, eyeing his circle of visitors with an look that said she'd love to.

"No, no, sorry for asking." McLaggen quickly reneged. Draco stepped away from Hermione, and she saw him throw a glare at McLaggen as he grabbed the privacy curtain and yanked it shut, hiding them from the onlookers.

"You'll start more rumors." Hermione noted, her eyebrows raising.

"I said I don't care." His voice wavered a bit, betraying his concern.

"Liar." She croaked, giving him a small smile.

"Do you..." He paused, looking at the blank curtain to gather his thoughts. Hermione waited patiently, watching what she could see of his face as he thought. He was worried. And trying to be brave. He took a deep breath, and turned back to her.

"What do you want to do?" He asked, his face serious, and searching hers.

"About?"

"This. The rumors. McGonagall already knows. Pansy knows. McLaggen knows. The whole school will at least suspect, even if we deny it," she could see where he was leading, and the twitch of his face as he pulled away from the point, refusing to suggest it first. "So, what do you want to do?"

She gave a small shrug in response, knowing it had to irritate him. He narrowed his eyes slightly at her, and she groaned, sitting up slightly. He watched her struggle for posture, and stared her down, still refusing to say it first.

"Draco, do you want to just tell everyone we've slept together? Is that what you're getting at?" She asked, purposely misconstruing his words.

"No, that's not what-" He ran an aggravated hand through his hair, closing his eyes, and looking at her with a glare of frustration. "I meant..." He choked, his mouth open, but no sound coming out. She raised her eyebrows, torturing him with her unwillingness to finish his sentence.

"Do you want..." He trailed off again, looking pained, staring down at her. She grinned up at him, feeling a small wave of pity at his expression.

"Do I want what, Draco?" She asked, forcing her sore throat to produce the words, her playful smile glittering up at him.

"Do you want maybe official or whatever..." He mumbled, barely intelligible. She grinned at him, getting one last prod in.

"Sorry?"

"Are you willing to date me? For real? In front of everyone?" He choked out, his face bright red, his eyes twitching around the closed off space, looking everywhere but at her. She held her breath, taking in his face, the anxiety written across it, his quickly rising chest, his clenched fists. He glanced at her, and she crooked a finger at him, hearing the approaching footsteps of Madam Pomfrey as she came back for the pre-dinner clearout.

"Dinner's soon, go on. You can come back tomorrow." She said, slowly managing to get McLaggen's guests to leave, as Draco leaned toward Hermione, watching her mischievous face warily.

"Come on, out you go." Madam Pomfrey's voice was shooing the students out, and Hermione grabbed Draco's tie, pulling him in, to whisper right in his ear.

"Only if you promise to keep fucking me like your dirty little secret." She hissed, just as the curtains were yanked open by a stern-faced hospital witch.

"Dinner-time, out you go." She said, waving toward the door. Draco pulled slowly away from Hermione, looking down into her blushing face, her eyes still glittering with devilry, as he was pushed from the ward, his face stunned, and the way his teeth pulled at his bottom lip betraying his arousal as he was forced away from her. Hermione grinned to herself long after he'd gone, feeling her blush slowly recede, only to come back full-force when she replayed the moment in her head. "I really said that!" She mentally shouted to herself, turning on her side to bury her squeal of alarm into her pillow.

"I can't believe I said that to him!" She rolled back over, staring at the ceiling with a look of gleeful horror, her stomach churning with butterflies. She'd said similar things in the heat of the moment, but voicing something like that in an occupied room? She rolled over again, to the wrong side.

McLaggen was staring at her.

"What're you so happy about?" He asked, his voice matching the venomous look on his face.

"Never you mind." She shot back, giving him a glare, before turning over, and grinning into her pillow again, the butterflies beating mercilessly at her stomach, her heart lurching as she remembered the vulnerable way he'd looked at her, and her thighs clenching tighter as she recalled the final look he'd given her before being pushed from the room by Madam Pomfrey. She had no doubt that if they'd been alone, he would have taken her right then, more mercilessly than the butterflies abusing her innards.

She looked up at the clock futilely, hoping she'd be released soon.

A/N: We're now officially caught up with my deviantart account. But since there's more readers here, I'll keep uploading what I've got here. :D

Chapter 24: No One Will Hear You Scream

Hermione trudged her way through the week, the workload of their first week back seeming nearly intolerable. She'd do fine on her own, but she kept offering to proofread, and basically rewrite Harry's homework as well. Ron hadn't spoken to her since she had admitted to her friends that she and Draco were now together. The thought still gave her tingles.

It'd been an awkward beginning, unsure, and apprehensive. They'd been uncomfortable being watched by their peers as the walked to class together, talked in the halls, and ignored each other's friends. Crabbe and Goyle didn't seem to care that the pair were dating, still sticking by Draco in the halls, and at meals. She'd even witnessed Goyle smile at her in passing. Ron refused to look at her, his own girlfriend seeming like an octopus, even more firmly attached than usual as Ron seemed in a perpetual bad mood. Harry had been livid at first, refusing to believe that Malfoy had changed, but as the week progressed, he'd become less hostile, and more ambivalent toward the presence of his enemy. He seemed to be taking the philosophy of see-no-evil literally, pretending Malfoy didn't even exist. Ginny was the only one who seemed to be willing to try being friendly toward Malfoy, in her own way. She wasn't as chummy with him as she was with Harry, but she wasn't ignoring him, or threatening to hex him, which Hermione saw as a sign of improvement. Pansy had tried hexing her at least twice more, only to end up with detention for a month.

Hermione had found that with her and Draco's relationship in the open, it was much harder to sneak off unnoticed. By Friday, most of the whispers had quieted, but eyes still followed the pair when they were together. Hermione did her best to ignore it, while Malfoy threatened to dock points from anyone who he caught staring too long. His way had seemed to work better so far, but she was loathe to admit it aloud.

Friday evening, after dinner, she made her way up the stairs toward McGonagall's office, dragging her feet as she went, more from the company she knew she'd have to suffer than the detention itself.

When they'd all arrived at the office, McGonagall stood from her desk, and walked around it, her footsteps sharp on the stone floor, her face stern.

"Tonight's detentions will be served together." She announced, to the groaning of nearly everyone present. Hermione was the only one who held her composure, waiting for the task

they'd be set.

"Since you all think yourselves capable enough witches and wizards to cast jinxes freely, you'll be assisting Hagrid with some work in the forest this evening." She said, gesturing behind the quintet of students. They all turned to see Hagrid standing in the doorway, bundled in his warm moleskin coat.

"I'll give ye all a chance ter get yer cloaks an' whatnot, and we'll be meetin' in the Entrance Hall in fifteen minutes." He grumbled, looking the students over, and giving Hermione and Ginny a small smile. The students filed silently from the room under the stern gaze of Professor McGonagall, and went to fetch their winter cloaks. Ginny and Hermione wondered all the way up and back down the stairs what they'd be doing in the forest. Neither could decide what was most likely.

When they regrouped in the Entrance Hall, Hagrid bid them follow, and they all filed down the stairs to the castle grounds, walking past Hagrid's hut, and to the edge of the forest. They all stopped, and Hagrid gestured to a few cages lined up along the ground.

"Ye'll be workin' in pairs to catch Night Sprites," he announced, gesturing to the cages. "I'll be usin' 'em with the firs' years, so catch as many as ya can, 'cause I expec' quite a few of 'em ter get away." He said, and pulled a bit of parchment from his breast pocket.

"Professor McGonagall has given me a list of pairs, since she doesn't trust you lot not ter try cursing each others' ears off if left alone. Now then," he said, eyeing them all as Pansy opened her mouth to argue, cutting her off. "Parkinson and McLaggen will work tergether, Malfoy and Granger, an' Weasley's with me, since she's the youngest." He folded the parchment back up, put it in his pocket, and eyed the group of students.

"I expec' each o' you lot back here in an hour, with a cage full o' sprites," He gave each a hard look. "If anyone gets hexed, it's another detention fer everyone, so I suggest you stick ter yer own pairs." He growled, eyeing McLaggen and Malfoy sternly. "Now, if anyone gets inter trouble, shoot up red sparks, wait there, and I'll come to ya." He grabbed a cage, and strolled into the forest, Ginny on his heels at nearly a run, trying to keep up. Hermione grabbed another of the cages, and followed suit, following the path into the dark trees.

"Talk about lucky." Draco drawled from behind her, his voice right in her ear.

"We're supposed to be catching sprites, not messing around." Hermione chastised him, feeling her heart racing in the darkness, with him so close.

"And what about what you said, Granger? How am I supposed to 'fuck you like a dirty little secret' when we're never alone?" His words made her blush, and she spun around, shoving the cage into his hands.

"I only said that to get a rise out of you." She huffed, stalking farther into the forest, keeping an eye out for the soft glowing of Night Sprites.

"It worked." His voice held the innuendo of her words, and she walked faster, trying to ignore the pulsing heat in her veins. She couldn't afford to be distracted by him, arousal or no.

"I haven't told my father about us, yet." Draco admitted abruptly into the still forest air.

“Oh?”

“I’m... I’m worried he’ll disown me.”

“Does your mother know?” Hermione asked, reading into his choice of words.

“Yes. I sent her a letter, but asked her not to tell father.”

“Could she help talk sense to him?” Hermione asked.

“I’m sure she’d try, but my father is pretty single-minded about mud-muggleborns.” He said, catching himself before the insult finished. Hermione smiled to herself, her heart clenching with pride as he made an effort to improve.

“Well, if he’s so unreasonable, why not just leave?” Hermione asked, attempting to understand the intricacies of the Malfoy family.

“I have nowhere to go. And if he disowns me, I’ll have no money, no home, no name... Nothing.” She turned around, stopping him in his tracks, and taking the cage from him, setting it on the ground.

“You’d still have your mother. And your friends. And you could earn money, like everyone else.” She tried to encourage him, but he just shook his head.

“Doing what? I can’t do anything. I’ve never worked. I’ve never cleaned my own clothes, or cooked my own food. I’m useless without my family name.” He said, looking down into her eyes. She could see the hopeless expression on his face, and pulled him to her, hugging him tightly.

“You’re not useless.” She argued. “You’re smart. You’re handsome. You’re cunning. People have started with less.” She said, pulling away from the hug, and looking up into his dark grey eyes. “The Malfoy name can’t be that crippling.” She poked him in the ribs, and he smiled back, his hands stroking at her hair, and arms.

“You know, you’re probably the only witch I’ve dated that hasn’t asked how rich I am...” He said, looking down at her appraisingly. “And on top of that, you’re encouraging me to just give it all up. Aren’t you even the least bit curious how much I’d be walking away from?”

“Not really.” Hermione lied, his words sparking an unquenchable need to know. It was the same need she got when she saw the title of an intriguing book, and just had to see what was inside. “I’m not interested in your money, Malfoy.” She admitted, glancing him up and down suggestively.

“I know.” He said with a smile, pulling her closer to him, and pressing her back into a tree, tilting his head down to kiss her. He let a week’s worth of pent up tension and arousal out, kissing her roughly, biting at her lip, and pressing his thigh between her legs, just where he knew she must be burning.

“Ahem.” The gruff cough caught their attention, and they jerked apart, staring guiltily around at Hagrid. Ginny was jogging up behind him, her face flushed from running after him. Hagrid’s hand gripped a cage full of Night Sprites, and what she could see of his face through his bushy

beard looked ruddy with embarrassment.

"Not caught many sprites, eh?" Hagrid grumbled, gesturing to their empty cage.

"No, sorry, haven't seen any. Lots where you were?" Draco asked nonchalantly, nodding toward Hagrid's full cage.

"I know where they like to hide." Hagrid shrugged.

"Not that you two were doing much looking..." Ginny popped into the conversation, still huffing for breath.

"We were looking!" Hermione argued. "We only kissed the once!" She said, her face heating again.

"It's true, there weren't any Night Sprites around here that we missed." Draco drawled, picking up the cage.

"Then ye'd better look elsewhere." Hagrid growled, pointing to the trees. Ginny was grinning at Hermione's embarrassment, but said nothing, only wagging her eyebrows a few times before jogging after Hagrid, back toward the edge of the forest.

"Come on, we'd better find some bloody sprites, or we'll probably earn another detention." Draco growled, grabbing Hermione's hand, and pulling her with him into the forest. He seemed determined to get all the way through the forest before stopping, and Hermione finally pulled him to a halt, panting for air.

"Where are you going, Draco, the north pole?" She asked, eyeing him suspiciously.

"Deeper. Clearly there's no sprites out here, so we have to go deeper." he said, shrugging. Then let a wicked smile split his face. "So deep, that no one will hear you scream."

She looked into his face, feeling her lungs burning, her heart racing, and her face stretching into a smile. She started forward, practically running along the path, dragging him behind her as she bound eagerly toward a hiding spot.

Draco pulled her to a stop a few minutes later, pushing her breathless body against a tree, kissing her deeply as she tried to catch her breath. She wrapped her arms around his neck, feeling her heartbeat drumming in her chest, her legs burning from running so far, her throat burning with the intake of frigid air.

Draco's hands pushed her robes up, caressing her wool-covered thighs and rear. He pulled her tights and underwear down just far enough to grant him access, and turned her around, pressing her heaving chest into the tree.

She could feel him rubbing the head of his erection along her bared ass cheek, and turned to look him in the eyes.

"Please, Draco." She moaned, playing his favorite game. He grinned at her, slipping his shaft between her legs and thrust slowly, pleasuring himself against her wetness and thighs without actually being inside her. He slid back, and she tilted her hips, making him slip right in as he

thrust forward. She closed her eyes, enjoying the feeling of him within her, the heat of his length filling her completely. He grabbed her hips, thrusting in and out gently a few times, letting her brace herself against the tree, before he picked up his pace, increasing in ferocity until she clung to the tree, her face pressed into the bark uncomfortably as he pushed against her.

Draco could see the outline of her face in the dark, her barely-held-together expression, and his dick disappearing into her over and over again. He drove as hard as he could into her, making her let out a soft moan, and knew she was holding back.

He pulled out of her, tugged her away from the tree, and pushed her slowly to the ground, following after her. He rolled her onto her back, watching her lusty expression as he lifted her legs, still trapped together by the stockings, and placed them over his shoulders, guiding himself back inside of her. He shifted to press down against her, his knees scraping the cold ground as he thrust, pushing farther and farther, changing the angle with every thrust, until her legs were nearly parallel with her body, and her eyes were squeezed tight, her voice filling the night air.

"That's what I like to hear." He moaned, watching her face as she tensed, her expression pure ecstasy as she climaxed. He gave a few more deep thrusts, and pulled away once again, leaning back, and pulling her to sit up while she groaned in frustration.

"I'm close, Granger, so be nice." He said, standing to present himself to her, right at eye-level. She looked up at him, and licked her lips, her eyes darting back down to his cock. She took him in her mouth eagerly, lapping up the taste of herself. She moved her head back and forth, pleasuring him as he ran his fingers through her hair.

"Touch yourself, Granger." He directed, grinning appreciatively when she immediately slid a hand between her legs. "If you can come before I do, I'll make you scream with bliss." He promised.

Her eyebrows drew together with desire, and she moved her hand faster, determined to get the promised reward. He grinned down at her, and slid both hands into her hair.

"Deep breath, Granger." He ordered, waiting for her to comply, before pulling her onto him, using her mouth to get off. She gasped for air when he let her up, and looked up at him with pleading eyes. He grinned down at her, pulling her in again, and rocking his hips back and forth a few times, racing her to orgasm with her own throat. He kept at it, letting her up for air briefly, and rocking into her throat repetitively, setting a pace for her to beat.

Her throat tightened around him with a moan, and he pulled away, letting her gasp for air as she climaxed, keeping her face tilted upward to see her every tiny expression of pleasure. When she opened her eyes he pressed his cock back into her mouth, and thrust quickly to his own orgasm, pulling away slightly just before he came, letting her suck him gently to a finish. He stared down at her in awe, watching her give his twitching dick one last lick before closing her mouth, and swallowing his cum.

"You're perfect." He growled, falling to his knees, and kissing her roughly, pressing her back onto the forest floor again, and massaging her breasts through her robes. She closed her eyes in enjoyment as he rubbed her, gasping quietly when he pinched her nipple and pulled at it through her clothes. Draco slid her robes up, exposing more of her to the cold air, and kissing his way toward her navel, delaying briefly to nip at the same nipple he'd tugged, his teeth finding purchase with the cotton robes. Her back arched into him, and he slid a hand between her legs,

touching her gently, teasing.

He moved his mouth to her hips, licking at a bit of skin, and leaving it exposed to the chill air as he moved lower, torturing her with the cold, and his hot mouth. Her hands fisted in his hair as he placed a light kiss on the edge of her sex, before moving lower, kissing along her thigh as he pushed her stockings further down her legs, letting her thighs part for him to nestle between.

He lapped at her wetness, running his tongue up and down her sensitive skin, watching her back arch, and hips tilt as he toyed with her. He brought his hand to meet his mouth, slipping the tip of one finger inside her as he pressed his tongue against her entrance. She moaned softly, her hips moving back and forth as she enjoyed herself.

He slid the finger all the way in, slowly, lapping at the most sensitive bundle of nerves she had, and curling his digit, feeling for the perfect movement. His finger curled upward, and her hips jerked, making him grin against her skin. Perfect.

He slowly slid a second finger in, quickening the pace of his tongue, and caressing the spot inside her that made her squirm. She moaned loudly, her voice unburdened by the fear of being caught, or self-consciousness. He moved his fingers in and out, keeping them bent at the perfect angle, going faster and faster with each stroke, licking and sucking at her with his mouth, and listening to her voice rise in pitch as she got closer and closer to another orgasm.

She climaxed against him, shaking, and keening with delight, her hands pulling roughly at his hair, her hips bucking against his fingers. And still he kept going, pushing her past her orgasm, making her groan as he continued to work her over-sensitive flesh, and ignoring the needy squeeze of her legs as he pushed his fingers deeper, changing the pleasure, making her writhe all over again.

By the time he pulled away, she was gasping for breath, and spasming with every gentle touch he placed on her thighs and stomach.

"You got pretty loud, but you didn't quite scream. Should I keep going?" He asked, teasing her spent body with gentle fingertips on her hips.

"God, no, please. I think... I think I need a moment." She gasped, trying to push herself into a sitting position, but deciding against it as her arms wobbled dangerously beneath her.

"That's fine. I'll get the Sprites." He said, grinning, and stood to go fetch the cage. She stared over at him, taking shaky breaths as he opened the cage door, and stuck his wand through the other side of the cage.

"Accio Night Sprites." He said clearly, and waited as glowing forms emerged from the trees. They drifted slowly into the cage, his charm carefully controlled so they weren't injured. He counted them as they entered, his lips moving silently, his eyes trailing along each one.

Hermione stared at him, amazed as he was lit with the glowing blue light from the creatures, and closed the cage, securing them inside. He walked back over to her, still lying on the ground, still bare to the cold.

"Our hour's probably up." He said, crouching down beside her, and setting the cage next to her face. She looked up at his blue-lit expression, the sprites gently buzzing, the sounds of the

forest slowly coming into focus as she regained her senses.

"You look magical." She whispered, staring up at the blue sparkling from his silver eyes.

"Er, I am a wizard." He said with a smirk, touching her cheek gently.

"Not what I meant." She said, slowly pushing herself into a sitting position, and wrapping her cloak around her exposed skin.

"I think I know what you meant." He said, his eyes looking at her with wonder. She looked into the pixies, feeling a stab of vanity. Did she look to him like he did to her? She hoped she did, because he was absolutely beautiful, lit by the tiny fluttering wisps of light.

He helped her to her feet, and she pulled up her knickers and tights, letting her robes fall over her bare skin, and enjoying the warmth of her clothes.

"Can you walk, or will I be carrying you, as well?" Draco teased, picking up the cage of Sprites.

"I think I'm fine." Hermione replied, taking his hand, and letting him lead her from the forest, keeping her eyes on her feet, making sure she didn't trip on anything.

"Fall into a shrub, Granger?" Pansy's voice was a harsh alert to her appearance, and she touched her bushy hair automatically. She could feel the prickly leaves and pine needles from laying on the ground. Luckily, it was too dark for anyone to see her blush.

"Had a bit of trouble catching the Sprites." Draco intoned dully, as though he hadn't magicked them easily into the cage.

"We didn't have any. They seemed right happy to go in, didn't they?" McLaggen boasted, and Hermione saw Ginny glaring at him.

"Liar. I heard you shouting at them to cooperate, and 'get back here'." She sneered, tossing her red hair over her shoulder.

"Can't all be coddled by the giant, can we?" McLaggen shot back, making Ginny pull her wand.

"Ginny, don't!" Hermione stepped forward, reaching a hand across her friend to discourage any hexes. "He's not worth another detention." She said, glowering back at the boorish male.

"Oh, not even if they're as good as the one you've had?" Ginny whispered, smirking at her friend. Hermione blushed, and batted a hand at her hair, trying to knock the bits of forest free, guiltily.

"Here, let me help." Ginny offered, turning Hermione by the shoulders to pick at her hair in the dark, as Hagrid came around the edge of his hut, carrying a large crate.

"Oh good, yer back," he said with a smile, and looked at their full cage. "Good work! What happened to yer hair, Hermione?"

"She fell trying to catch a few of the sprites." Draco shrugged, and Hagrid gave him a strange look, but said nothing more about it.

"Well, looks ter me like ye've all got yer sprites, and no one's been hurt. I guess that's bedtime fer ya then. Go on, an' no more fightin'!" He bellowed after them as an afterthought, as they made their way as a group back to the castle, slowly separating into groups. Ginny and Draco stayed with Hermione, while Parkinson and McLaggen trailed ahead of them, gossiping about what Hermione suspected was herself and Malfoy. It seemed as though their detention together had brought out a common interest in their newfound hatred of the pair. Hermione grinned to herself, wondering how long it would take Cormac to get as grabby with Pansy as he'd been with her. But the way he inched closer, she doubted it would be terribly long.

A/N: We're all caught up, so after this, I'll only be able to upload as fast as I can write it. I'm trying to get enrolled and set up for college so it might be a bit longer between uploads than I'd like, but please bear with me! <3

Chapter 25: Claim

Hermione followed Ginny up the stairs to the Entrance Hall, enjoying how easily she and Draco seemed to accept each other's company. As they walked, falling farther behind Pansy and McLaggen, Ginny and Draco bantered, their usual insults put on hold as they mocked McLaggen in unison. Ginny was relating what she'd heard and seen of McLaggen and Pansy's attempt at catching Night Sprites, and Malfoy was offering rude interpretation and suggestions about the Gryffindor. He didn't seem to be slandering Pansy at all, which caused a well of confused feeling inside Hermione.

She was glad that he showed a bit of loyalty, a bit of evidence that should things end between them, he wouldn't drag her through the mud. However glad she was at this thought, it didn't stop the nagging uncertainty that'd begun the moment Pansy had called him out in the hospital. Draco had denied being with her, but Hermione, despite her feelings for the blond heir, hadn't been able to forget how she'd felt when she first saw Lavender all over Ron. She was sure Ron had also denied being with her, to Lavender. Was Draco just another liar that she was getting too involved with? Did Draco still have any feelings for Pansy, like she did for Ron?

"You go ahead, I'd like a private word with my girlfriend." Malfoy's soft tug at her sleeve brought her head up, and she saw Ginny waving, and jogging up the stairs, and Malfoy pulled her toward a tapestry.

"Wait, I'm-" Hermione began trying to excuse herself, only to be cut off by Malfoy taking her hand, and lacing his fingers through hers.

"So eager to get away, Hermione?" Draco said quietly, an enticing smile curving his lips. The way her name sounded on his voice was all the encouragement she needed to follow him, darting quickly behind the wall hanging, and up a short flight of hidden stairs, into small windowless chamber. It wasn't wide enough for her to stretch both her arms out, but with just her and Draco, it seemed cozy, almost comfortable if it weren't just three and a half stone walls.

"Something I can help you with? It's going to be past curfew soon." Hermione grinned back at him, trying to put aside her doubts. He'd done nothing so far to earn her distrust, and she'd not become a paranoid old maid, just because she'd been hurt once.

"Actually, there are a few long essays I'd like your help with." He growled playfully, pulling her against him, one arm wrapped around her waist while the other cupped her bottom. She felt the hard press of his erection against her stomach, and wrapped her arms around his shoulders, smiling widely at his eagerness.

"Mr. Malfoy, I'm sorry to have to say, but I'm not currently offering tutoring, on any subject." Hermione teased, as though he were anyone else asking her a favor.

"Damn. There goes my grade." He muttered sarcastically, leaning down, and trapping her between his lips and the wall. The soft warm feel of his mouth on hers was like a drug, lulling her thoughts away from worries and reason. He was so good at making her lose her mind.

"I could hardly stand watching you cum over and over, while I just pleased you. It was so tempting to take you again, Hermione. Watching your face as you climax, hearing you call out for more... I want to fuck you again." His words in her ear were a quiet hiss of need. She couldn't tell if she was even breathing anymore, and managed a short few nods, her voice not working, and her fingers only managing to dig into the collar of his robe. She didn't care that he'd already caressed her to nearly painful completion, she wanted more of him. More of his body pressed into her. More of him holding her tightly. More of him whispering in her ear. His earlier ministrations weren't nearly as fulfilling as having him against her as she climaxed.

The alcove was nearly pitch black, but she could just make out the shine of his eyes, the rough shape of him in the dark. It made everywhere he touched feel so much more sensitive. Every nerve jumped alive as his hands brushed against her bum, hips, waist. She realized he was pulling her robe up, and pushed her shoulders away from the wall, letting it slip right over her head. She stripped of her tights as she dropped her robe to the floor, standing in just her bra and panties. His lips fell to hers again, as his hands massaged her back, and sides, his fingers dancing gracefully over her skin. She shivered against the cold stone, and squeezed him more tightly against her, craving his warmth.

"Do you want to try a new game, Hermione?" He asked in a husky voice, unclasping his cloak, and letting it fall to the ground with her discarded frock.

"S-sure." She managed to answer, feeling flushed, and willing to do anything he wanted. His words had brought back memories of his other thrills, and she found herself anticipating a new one. Would it be as enjoyable as being spanked? Would it be as humiliating?

"It's different from the others..." He hedged, his voice sounding a bit more lucid. He pulled back slightly and even though she couldn't see very well she felt as though he were gauging her reaction.

"What is it?" She asked, taking a few calming breaths, trying to prepare for whatever he said.

"We have to be quiet, in case we're caught, pretty easy. But I also... I... I want you to leave marks on me."

Draco took a deep breath and held it, waiting for her verdict. He couldn't see her face properly in the dark, but he could feel her reacting underneath him. She was holding her breath, too, shifted against him, and finally, spoke.

"What do you mean?" She asked, her voice hesitant, wary.

"Well, I leave marks on you all the time. Hickeys, bite marks. You can probably guess why, and I want..." He paused, a flicker of doubt seizing his words, keeping him from saying what it was he wanted.

"You want a bruise?" She asked, confused.

"No, not a bruise. Marks. I don't really care what, I just... Want you to mark me. Make me yours." He said the last quietly, half hoping she couldn't hear. Some small portion inside him still sang with doubt, saying any time now she'd have enough, and tell him to sod off. She'd see who he was underneath, and decide she didn't want him.

"Make you mine?" She asked, sounding less confused, and more embarrassed. "Didn't I already do that when I agreed to date you publicly?"

"It's... It's okay, if you don't want to. I was just-" He tried to save face, and take the request back, but she cut him off, having none of his cowardice.

"I didn't say that. I just don't understand." Those words coming from anyone else would've sounded like a judgement. But coming from her, they sounded like a plea. Ever the bookworm, she needed to understand what was presented to her. She needed to know what was under the surface of the request. She wanted to actually comprehend him.

He slid his hands up to her face, and brushed a soft kiss against her lips, trying to order his thoughts.

"How to say it without sounding like an obsessed, jealous, maniac?" He thought, pulling his face back again. "There's no good way to say it, just try to explain, and hope she's not scared off."

"I like leaving marks on you, because it makes me feel like I have a claim on you, even if it's just temporary, or easily hidden. It's... Satisfying. I don't mean that I want to own you or anything! Just... that... I know when you see it, you'll remember, and... I want that."

"You want me to remember? Or you want momentos so you can remember, too?" She asked, her voice holding none of the contempt or horror he'd been afraid of.

"Both. I want you to mark me, Hermione. Claim me, if you want." He whispered, resting his forehead against hers, feeling as though a ten ton weight had left him. She wasn't calling him names. She wasn't laughing at him. She wasn't running away.

"You don't care how, or where?" She asked, and he heard a suspicious lilt in her voice. He grinned, loving the way she immediately sought mischief.

"I don't recall saying I didn't care 'where', Miss Granger." He said, easily snapping back to his teasing, playfulness. She was game, and he wasn't going to miss out on their fun.

Hermione grinned into the dark, knowing he couldn't see her face and hoping her voice didn't give her away. She'd enjoyed seeing the bitemarks, the hickeys, all the proof that it wasn't a dream she would wake from. Tangible proof that he wanted her. He wanted her to leave the same proof on him. He wanted to be hers. He wanted lasting, visible, evidence. She felt as though she could laugh, and squeal, and growl, all at once.

“Well, Draco, how about I agree to leave your face? I prefer it how it is.” She murmured, boldly squeezing herself into him, pressing her body flush with his.

“That works for me.” He said conversationally, his hands squeezing her rump. He was pressing her into the chilly wall, and she gave his robes an upward tug, indicating he should remove them. His robes and scarf were over his head in a black and green pool on the floor with record speed, revealing black trousers, and a matching t-shirt. She ran her hands over the soft material, reaching the hem, and lifting it just high enough to reveal a flat belly lined with muscle. Her fingers feathered over the pale abdomen, and she sank to her knees, her eyes looking up to take in the outline of him above her. She kissed his stomach gently, savoring the deep breath he sucked it, and caressed her mouth lower, placing butterfly kisses as she went. His hands held his shirt out of the way, leaving the expanse of his chest and belly exposed to the chilly air as she trailed her lips back up toward his belly button. She pressed her lips firmly to his skin, and sucked.

A squeal of air made her pull back and laugh, embarrassed by her own failed attempt at a hickey.

“Sorry, I don’t really know how...” She giggled, her hands grasping his hips as he chuckled back, his fingers rubbing the spot she’d accidentally tickled.

“Use your tongue, too. It’ll help create suction.” He advised, moving his hand out of her way. She looked up at his face, her eyes adjusting slowly to the darkness enough that she could make out where his nose, mouth, and the hollows of his eyes were. She fought a self-conscious smile, and leaned back in, pressing her mouth to him once again. She suckled gently, trying to keep her lips from breaking away, or making another shrill mistake.

“Harder...” He encouraged, his hand pressing on the back of her head to pull her a bit closer. She closed her eyes, and pressed her mouth harder against him, sucking as hard as she could, until it made her tongue hurt. She broke away with a slight ‘pop’, and inspected the small mark she’d left. She grinned, and poked a finger at it, looking up at him.

“It worked!” She stated, pleased with her achievement. She pressed her lips to him again, right above the edge of his trousers, repeating the motion, and proving she’d gotten the hang of it. Her reward was another small bruise marring his perfect pale skin.

“Having fun?” Draco asked, his smile occupying his tone, his fingers scratched affectionately in her hair.

“Mhm. How many do you want?” She asked, feeling the strangest desire to continue branding him with her mouth.

“As many as you’re willing to give me.” He responded with warmth, pulling his shirt over his head to reveal the ample terrain she could work across. Hermione pushed herself to her feet, and pulled him against her, kissing his chest, and left behind another small claim. His arms wrapped around her, warming her bare waist, and embracing her endeavor.

Hermione grinned, and grabbed his hair, pulling him down so she could reach more of him. She kissed his neck lightly, teasing, and nipped at his shoulder.

"That's too light, it won't stick." he murmured in her ear, his lips kissing their way down her own throat, and to her shoulder. He mimicked her action, nipping the skin, and spoke again. "Bitemarks have to be hard." He bit slowly into her shoulder, squeezing, making her wince as he displayed just how hard she'd have to be.

"It hurts more when we're not... distracted." She noted, resisting the urge to rub her burning shoulder.

"I know. That was softer than usual, too. That one'll probably fade before you wake up." He told her, dropping a kiss to the outline of his teeth on her. She nodded, and leaned forward, sinking her teeth into him again, copying his slow pace, not wanting to accidentally bite too hard.

"Harder, Granger." He encouraged, his fingers squeezing her back gently. She tightened her jaw, and felt his skin giving slightly under her hold. He gasped quietly, and she pulled away, instantly worried.

"Was that too hard?" She questioned, feeling a bit guilty.

"No." He denied, pulling his head back to kiss her passionately. She pressed into him, once again feeling his stiff member pressing through his pants. She wrapped her arms around his neck, his hand slid to her rear lifting her against him as he rocked his hips against her. She gave a small jump, lifting herself even higher, loving how he held her up so she could wrap her legs around his hips, and pinned her to the wall, easily supporting her as they embraced.

His lips grazed her shoulder as he bent slightly sideways, his arm wrapped around her thigh, as he fumbled open the closure of his pants, releasing his length, and pressing it into the fabric of her underwear. His teeth closed over her skin as he rubbed against her, leaving his own imprint on her skin, and encouraging her to continue doing the same. Hermione retaliated with excitement, rocking her hips provocatively against his and biting him right next to her first attempt.

A guttural growl rumbled from Draco's throat and his fingers squeezed her almost painfully. The sharp pain from Hermione's teeth felt like fire shooting into his veins, creating a heat and tension inside him that demanded he release it one way or another. He pushed her knickers out of the way and shoved himself into her, trying desperately to relieve the searing tightness that felt like steel bands constricting his chest, stopping his breath. Hermione's mouth left him as she drew in a sharp breath, her arms squeezing around his neck. She pulled him closer, letting out a little moan of discomfort and pleasure as he crushed her into the wall and pleased himself with her smarting wetness. He could feel her twitch around him as the base of his sex pressed into her most sensitive and overworked peak.

"Ahh..." She groaned into his ear, her nails digging into his back as he further tortured her abused channel.

"Harder..." Draco panted, his shoulder still stinging where she'd bitten him, the fire in his blood demanding more. She readily complied, tilting her head slightly and seized the base of his neck, muffling her suffering with his salt-flavored skin.

"Harder." He demanded breathlessly, his hips jerking roughly as she nearly broke his skin, their combined efforts bringing him euphoria.

Draco slowed to a stop, trying to catch his breath. Hermione let up, shaking slightly with overstimulation, the removal of her teeth making him wince with pain as her teeth unlocked and left his imprinted skin to retake its former shape. With his orgasm, the tightness in his chest evaporated, and he suddenly felt drained. He couldn't recall ever finishing so quickly.

He let her down slowly, making sure she was steady on her feet before he pulled away. She was panting slightly, and smiling up at him.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to come before you..." He breathed, feeling gooseflesh rise as the cold air surrounded him.

"It's fine. I'm not entirely sure I even could orgasm right now..." She said in a rather clinical manner, readjusting her knickers back into place with a slight wince. He gave a soft chuckle, feeling a tad guilty for making her so obviously sore.

"Sorry about that." He offered, unable to clear the smile from his own face as she bent to retrieve her stockings.

"Don't apologize." She said, wobbling slightly, and plopping soundly to the ground to pull the garment on, her limbs shaking slightly as she tried to dress. He nodded, and retrieved his undershirt, pulling it on, and trying not to smile too widely as the movements of getting dressed pulled painfully at the bruised flesh of his shoulder.

A quick wave of his wand cleaned himself before he buttoned his trousers, and as he pulled his robes back on, he watched as she stood to yank her tights properly into place.

"You know, Granger, as unsanitary as that is, the thought of you walking up to your dorm with me all over you is... unspeakably satisfying." He grinned, feeling a bit foolish as he knelt in front of her, wrapping his arms around her hips, and pressed his mouth to her belly, leaving his own small suction mark on her.

"Well, it feels disgusting, so don't get too used to the thought." He could hear the smile in her voice, and pulled the edge of her tights down a tiny bit, leaving another hickey just underneath before he let them snap back into place. He stood, and kissed her before letting her finish getting dressed.

He didn't want to let her go yet, but he felt as though he could barely keep his eyes open. He wanted to drag her with him, into his bed, and sleep with her properly. Of all the girls he'd fucked, she was the second he'd been public with, and the only one not to share his bed. He didn't think she'd much appreciate being surrounded by his cronies, however much she trusted him.

She tossed her scarf around her neck, and looked up at him, her dark eyes scrunched with her smile, her lips stretched with happiness.

"I love you, Hermione." He said, the words spilling from his mouth before he could stop them. The steel bands seemed to be tightening around his chest again. He cared so much for her, and was so worried that she would come to hate him again. He was certain that if things went up in flames, he would burn too, until he was no more.

"What's wrong?" She asked, her smile dropping, her hands reaching out to him, wrapping

around his waist. Her eyes were piercing him, the quick intelligence behind them dissecting his features, his voice, the panic with which his arms wrapped around her shoulders.

"Nothing's wrong." He lied, pulling her to his chest so she couldn't see his face. He buried his face in her hair and squeezed his eyes closed, trying to banish the dark tint that seemed to be poisoning his thoughts.

"Draco, I can tell you're lying. Please just tell me what's the matter?" She beseeched, but the words stuck in his throat. How could he tell her that nothing was wrong, except his own bitter musings? Would she laugh at him for imagining the worst? Would she hate him for being unable to simply enjoy her company without his doubts turning on him?

"It's nothing." He insisted, squeezing her tighter, the feel of her squeezing him back banished the darkness slightly. He knew that the moment she left, it would come back, that he would lie awake, unable to stop the black mire from sucking him in.

Hermione felt as though his arms were threatening to crush her, so tightly was he holding on, but the stiffness in him, the way he sighed softly as she squeezed back, she couldn't bring herself to pull away. No matter what he said, something was clearly wrong, and she didn't want to make it worse.

She was reminded of the way he'd hugged her a few months ago, after they'd both apologized, and he'd been painfully honest with her for the first time.

"Are you having doubts about me being a Muggle-born again?" She asked tentatively, and was slightly relieved that she got a low chuckle in response.

"No. It really was nothing. Just a bout of melancholy at having to let you go to your own bed." He murmured, his voice shaking slightly with embarrassment as he buried his nose into her scalp.

"Oh." Was all Hermione managed in response, her fingers grabbing the back of his robe so her arms wouldn't fall. She could understand that. She'd never properly slept with Ron, always having to be back in Ginny's room before anyone else woke up, but with Draco clutched to her, and with the exhaustion threatening to pull her into sleep while they stood embracing, she wanted nothing more than to curl up into his side. But she couldn't take him back to Gryffindor Tower, he'd never be able to make it up the girls' stairs. And she honestly didn't feel safe sleeping in the Slytherin dormitories. Malfoy's goons may not mind her presence, but she was certain plenty of other snakes would love a chance to persecute her. She knew Pansy for one would not appreciate seeing her march through the wall with Draco. She'd spent a night with him in a classroom after the Slug Club Christmas party, but there'd been a distinct lack of sleeping. She cast her mind around the castle, trying to think of somewhere safe they could curl up together. The library wouldn't be any more comfortable than a hallway. They'd be found pretty much anywhere that people might decide to hang out in the morning. She knew she'd like a lie in, and wasn't too keen on the idea of being woken up to shrieks of scandal.

There was the Room of Requirement, she thought, which might provide them somewhere comfy. She could recall Dobby in her fourth year telling her and Harry that it had provided him a place to stash Winky while she sobered up.

"I have an idea." Hermione finally announced, grinning into his shoulder. "You remember the Room of Requirement? The one Dumbledore's Army used last year?" She asked, recalling with

perfect clarity the heinous pink abomination who'd been assigned to keep them from learning proper Defense Against the Dark Arts.

"Yes." Malfoy sounded a bit irked at the memory of his Inquisitorial Squad trying to hunt them down most of the year.

"We could sleep there. It is the weekend, so we don't have to be in class in the morning. I don't think anyone would really miss us... Or be able to prove anything." She said in a conspiratorial tone. Draco pulled back slightly, smiling.

"I believe you're the most brilliant woman on the face of the earth, Hermione." He grinned down at her, gleefully, and Hermione's heart lurched with emotion at the sincerity of his smile. "Now all we have to do is make it up all those stairs without falling asleep."

Hermione smiled back and tugged him from the alcove, her legs feeling decidedly jellylike as she carefully descended the stairs, her fingers twined with Draco's the whole way there.

A/N: Sorry for how long it took to finish this chapter, the end just didn't want to come together.

Chapter 26: Furious

A/N: sorry it took three months to get this up, I just haven't been that motivated recently.

~***LissaDream**: I'm glad you're enjoying it, and hope my infrequent updates don't put you off of reading. :D I'll definitely be trying to focus more on this story, since we're getting close to the end, instead of the new ones I keep starting.

Cheichei87: There is definitely more. I'm not sure exactly how many more chapters after this one, but at least two, I think.

Hermione couldn't quite keep the grin from her face, though she was surrounded by Harry, Ginny, Draco, and Gregory Goyle. Hermione had been absolutely stunned when the troll-like boy had wandered into the library and taken a seat next to Draco, wordlessly pulling out a bit of paper to fiddle with as the rest studied. She'd caught the confused look Draco had given his crony, and wondered why on earth the brute would be in the library with them if he had no reason to, other than that Draco was present. He was paying none of the Gryffindors any mind, and the paper was folding and tearing itself as he toyed with it, his watery eyes darting around as he tried to figure out what she recognized as one of Fred and George's Paper Puzzles. They were supposed to be for children, but it seemed to be getting the best of the Slytherin lackey.

Hermione and Draco had joined her friends shortly after breakfast, Pleasantly shocked to find that the Room of Requirement had provided them with their meal, (the same fare as in the Great Hall, but with the added bonus of being comfortable in bed while they ate.) She had slept soundly, wrapped in Draco's arms, her worry of being discovered completely overridden by her total exhaustion. She'd been pretty sure he'd fallen asleep first, but it was a near thing, since she was out like a light, too.

Neither Ginny nor Harry had said a word about their absence at breakfast, or her failure to return the night previous, and she felt a world of gratitude that they at least had a bit of tact. She felt, though, that Ginny had probably told Harry not to ask about it, since she also kept catching his curious glances between the two. She was glad he hadn't looked under the table, or he'd see their feet connected at the ankles, only occasionally shifting when one appendage fell asleep.

"How do you spell 'noticeable'? Does it keep the 'e', or lose it?" Harry asked, looking up at Hermione for confirmation, his quill poised to write whatever she said.

"It keeps the 'e'. N-O-T-I-C-E-A-B-L-E." Malfoy answered before she could, almost absent-mindedly, his eyes lifting from his book only after he'd spoken. Hermione smirked at the murderous look Harry shot him, clearly saying with his eyes 'I didn't ask you'.

"He's right. It keeps the 'e'." Hermione agreed, wiping the smirk from her own face and trying to sound as impartial as possible.

"Thanks." Harry replied, his voice ungrateful, his eyes still glaring daggers at Malfoy. Hermione rolled her eyes and ignored the way Draco glared back, leaving the boys to their silent pissing contest while she got on with her own essay. She really did care for Draco, and Harry was her best friend, but she was about ready to kick them both. She kept her face studiously facing downward, ignoring both boys, and the dark robes she could see swishing toward their table. Just what she needed, another person to make the unstable mix even more likely to explode.

"Father? What are you doing here?" Draco's words were punctuated by his feet being pulled sharply from Hermione's, and she snapped her head up, catching the guilt on Draco's face before she looked upward to see the tall blond that loomed over their table.

"I came to have a word with you." The Malfoy sire replied, his voice icy, his grey eyes sweeping the table with disdain. "Not you, Gregory."

Both Draco and Goyle had made to stand, but Goyle fell back into his chair with a frown like a scolded child, saying nothing. Hermione wanted to ask what on earth he could have to discuss that was so important he interrupt his son's study, but Draco was already circling the table, and her throat seemed to be stuck closed in the presence of her boyfriend's father. His eyes lingered on hers for a moment longer, clearly filled with hostility, and then swept back to Harry, giving him an even dirtier look, before he grasped Draco's shoulder and steered him away from the table, heading somewhere more private.

"Do you think he'll be alright?" Hermione worried as soon as they disappeared around a shelf, half standing, as if to follow.

"Who cares?" Harry scoffed, but kept his eyes away from hers, unwilling to meet her chastising glare.

"He'll be fine." Ginny assured her friend, reaching across the table to pat Hermione's hand. "He'll probably lie about why he was sitting with us, say he was teasing Harry, and get himself out of trouble."

"I don't know... He's been acting different since he started sleeping with you..." Goyle's input was jolt to the table, and Hermione felt first her face heat at his words, and then her heart clench

at the meaning.

"They're not sleeping together, that's just a rumor." Harry snapped, glaring at Goyle. Hermione looked away from the table, but forced her voice to a normal tone.

"What do you mean he's acting differently?" She aimed the question in Goyle's direction, but couldn't look at him directly, her cheeks bright red from his casual mention of her sex-life. Clearly Slytherins were much more nonchalant about their intimacies.

"I dunno. Just different. He let himself get detention, didn't he?" Goyle snapped, crossing his arms petulantly. Hermione cracked a small smile at the thought. He really could have tried to get out of having any detention. Pansy probably would have taken his side no matter what garbage he said. And he'd taken the punishment, to get her out of deeper trouble, too.

"Hermione..."

She jerked around, her heart hammering in her chest at the voice that piped up from behind her. Ron hadn't spoken to her in nearly a week, and he stood there, hands in his pockets, face redder than hers, eyes downcast, and feet shuffling.

"Can I have a word?" He said, his voice cracking slightly at the end, before he cleared his throat, and looked up to meet her eyes with beseeching blue orbs. First Draco's father, and now Ron? Today was just filled with surprises.

"Umm... Sure." She agreed, feeling her chest tighten at the realization that Lavender wasn't latched to him. Had he slipped his leash? To talk to her? Despite her best efforts, that thought caused a zing of painful longing through her heart.

She left her things with Ginny and Harry and followed Ron, glancing back toward the direction that Draco and his father had gone, another tendril of worry creeping around her heart as she walked in the opposite direction, feeling almost as though she was abandoning him to the wrath of the cold-hearted man who'd pulled him away.

Ron led her into the hallway, and said nothing as he entered an abandoned classroom next to the library, casting a simple locking charm at the door to give them a bit of privacy. Hermione felt tension lace the air, nearly so thick she could taste it when she opened her mouth to speak.

"What do you want?" She asked, staring at Ron's turned back as she leaned against the teacher's desk, gripping the edge with her hands as she rested her bum against it.

"I wanted to talk to you." He muttered, turning, but kept his eyes lowered. Hermione nearly scoffed.

"About what?" She snapped, feeling the strangest sense of vertigo, being alone with him after so long apart. She thought of Draco, how comfortable it'd been to just sleep in his arms, to eat breakfast, and chat, to work on homework together. She used to be that comfortable around Ron, but now, she could see the ghost of a blonde on his lap, his face scrunched awkwardly as he snogged the yappy girl. Her broken heart wasn't healed, no matter how much she cared for Draco, and it still hurt being so close to Ron, yet feeling like he was unreachable.

"About us."

"There is no us." Hermione felt like the wind had been knocked out of her. After months of wishing to hear him say something about them being together, he was. She couldn't believe it, even as he took the few steps toward her, his bright blue eyes locked on hers, his body suddenly right in her space, seeming to fill more of the air than he actually took up. He was taller than Malfoy, and she had to crane her head slightly to maintain eye-contact, but as he looked down, she realized just how close he was. She should push him away, she should tell him to keep a friendly distance, now she was seeing someone else. But her mouth seemed glued shut once more as he leaned in closer.

"C'mon Hermione, I know you're pretending to see him, just to make me jealous."

His face was barely an inch from hers, and she could feel her heart hammering in her chest with anticipation and guilt. She knew he was about to kiss her, knew she shouldn't let him, knew that it was all she wanted. With his face so close, blue eyes staring into hers with such intensity, the memories of their last summer together were nearly tangible. She just wanted to feel the familiar press of his lips again. She felt frozen in place by the overpowering yearning, the insufferable regret for even wanting him, and as she stayed rooted to the spot, not backing down, Ron's eyes closed, and he leaned forward that last inch.

His lips were warm, and gentle, and Hermione's own eyes fluttered closed, trying to immerse herself in the feeling of the kiss. His hand was on her face, his head tilting, and his lips parting, and with a single second, the spell was broken. The kiss was no longer familiar, his tongue prodding past her lips, his body pressing her hips back into the edge of the desk, his hands holding her face in place as he plundered her mouth. It was more aggressive, while somehow seeming sloppier, and more practiced at the same time. She couldn't help wondering if this was how he kissed Lavender, and found her hands pushing at his chest, trying to detach herself from him, and turning her head to the side, so she could speak.

"Ron, wait—" She managed, but his mouth was following hers, breaking apart for only a second, to reply, his hands moving away from her face, down to her hips.

"Sorry, I know you don't like doing it while standing..." He muttered, lifting her easily onto the desk, and climbing over her, his mouth taking hers once again, his hands pushing her onto her back, and trailing across her blouse before she could even squeal in surprise.

"Ron, I—"

She was cut off by his tongue again, and felt him settling himself between her legs, one hand finding its way up her skirt, the other pushing her shirt up to reveal her stomach. Turning her head seemed useless, as his mouth stayed glued to hers, her hands pushing at his chest seemed only to be giving him the wrong idea, as he moved higher, rubbing his crotch into her stockings.

"Mmm!!!" Hermione squealed in her throat, trying to get his attention. She needed to stop this, now!

"Shh, someone will hear us!" His hand slid over her mouth, muffling the high-pitched sound, and she felt panic starting to rise in her, as his hand continued fighting with the waistband of her leggings. She wiggled uncomfortably, knowing that if he looked at her face, he'd see her fear, and stop. But his eyes weren't on her face, he was staring at her breasts, her gold bra pressing

into the white blouse, as she inadvertently pressed the mounds together, her defensively curled arms seeming to work against her as she grabbed at his hand, trying to pull it from her mouth.

"Gimme a second, I'm getting there." He smirked at her breasts, his hand moving from her mouth, to join his other, in undoing his belt.

"Please, Ron, stop!" She said, pulling her shirt down, and pressing once again at his chest. He finally looked into her eyes, his hands pausing on his pants, his face completely confused.

"Stop? Why, are you... Ya'know?" He said with a grimace, nodding toward her privates. It was the only way he'd ever been able to refer to her monthly cycle, and she felt her eyes rolling in her head at his assumption.

"No, I'm not." She bit out, irritated at his continuing lack of observational skills. He didn't seem to realize she'd been on the brink of tears at all, and as soon as the words had left her mouth, he was back on her, his face split into a happy grin, his lips moving against her mouth as he carelessly shoved aside her worries.

"Alright then! It's been so long, Hermione. I need this as much as you do." He mumbled, ignoring her pushing hands, and turning head. She felt the words pierce right into her heart, realizing that he wasn't interested in her. He was just horny, and thought she'd go for it, based on the summer.

"Ron!" She barked as well as she could around his wet kisses, realizing that he didn't seem to notice her struggles, or displeasure at all. He was so wrapped up in what he thought she wanted, he wasn't actually paying attention to her.

"Calm down, Hermione, there's no rush!" He said, giving her an encouraging smile, still under the impression that she was urging him on. His hands were under her skirt again, his fingers slipping clumsily under the waistband of her tights, his eyes glazed with a determined hunger. Horror swept through her, and she cast around for the fastest way to stop him, before he got any farther.

"We slept together!" She shot off, hoping his hatred of Malfoy would trump his lust.

"I know, I was there, Hermione." He said, smiling briefly, and frowning down at his fumbling fingers.

"No, I mean Malfoy!" she said, staring at his face as comprehension dawned. He looked confused again, but at least his hands had stopped. He didn't seem to believe it, but there was a spark of doubt. She had to push harder. "We started months ago. Our relationship isn't to make you jealous."

He looked like he'd been hit over the head, his mouth hanging open slightly, but as his expression changed, she felt relief. She'd guessed right, his hatred of Malfoy was taking priority.

"You're lying." He didn't sound sure, and was looking at her as though she'd betrayed him.

"I'm not. Get off of me." She said, hoping he'd listen this time. She didn't want to have to resort to hitting him, or calling for help. He was pushing away from her, about to slide off of the desk, when the door opened.

"Hermione, are you in-" The familiar voice was followed by a familiar face, and as the room froze, Hermione looked from Draco, standing in the doorway, to Ron, still kneeling over her in a very compromising position. She spoke, trying to explain the situation, at the same time Draco, and Ron both started speaking, making the room suddenly burst with their voices.

"It's not what it looks like, Draco, I swear!"

"Get the hell off of her, Weasley."

"What do you want? Can't you see we're busy?"

"Get off of her, last warning!"

"I didn't want to- He wouldn't listen-"

"Get out! You're not wanted here, Ferret!"

Draco had drawn his wand, his eyes narrowed dangerously at Ron, a look of absolute fury on his face as Ron continued to yell at him, and Hermione's words choked off, a lump constricting her throat. Ron slid from the desk, and pulled out his own wand, pointing it at Malfoy, still yelling at him, as Draco began shouting back. Hermione ignored their words, and jumped from the desk, righting her clothes, and staring between the two wizards worriedly, pulling her own wand.

"Just shut up!" Malfoy yelled across the room, the slightest flick of his wand the only indication of his spell before it hit Ron in the chest. Ron froze, his eyes wide as the body-bind took over his tall frame, his voice cutting off as he was paralyzed.

"Malfoy!" Hermione yelled, instantly worried about her ex-lover, and previous best friend. She pointed her own wand at the blond, in case he tried to cast any other spells at Ron.

"Did he hurt you, Hermione?" Malfoy asked, finally looking at her, his eyes surprised as he beheld her defensive stance.

"No, he didn't." She answered, hoping to dissuade Draco from hurting the redhead. Grey eyes pierced into hers, reading her expression, and he lowered his wand slowly, looking relieved.

"Good. I was worried... Nevermind." He shook his head, but shot a glare at the frozen Weasley. Hermione let her own wand drop to her side, and moved to Draco's side, keeping her voice low.

"He... got carried away. Thought I wanted to- but I didn't. I had to tell him I'd slept with you to make him stop. But he did stop." Hermione felt her face reddening. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean for-"

"It's okay." Draco cut her off, his eyes looking at her with all the gentleness she didn't feel she deserved.

"I let him kiss me, I'm sorry." She admitted, feeling the guilt burning a hole through her chest. His expression morphed to confusion, and then hurt. "I'm so sorry." Hermione didn't bother making any excuses, watching as he looked from her face, to the paralyzed Weasley.

"Are you going to take him back?" He asked, his voice a deadpan as he stared at the redhead,

his eyes slightly glazed.

“No. It was a mistake.” Hermione tried to answer, worried by the way his face had straightened to match his voice. He gave away nothing of his inner thoughts, and she felt a spike go right through her heart. She hadn’t even realized just how open he’d become around her until suddenly, his eyes were blank, and his face a mask.

“You’re not obligated to stay with me if you’d rather be with him.” He replied, his impassive grey eyes finding hers once more, staring into her own emotion-filled face as she answered.

“I don’t want to be with him. I don’t see you as some sort of consolation prize, Draco. I meant it when I said... That I’m falling for you.” Hermione forced the words out, though the last were a whisper, too soft for a motionless Ron to hear. Draco’s eyes narrowed a tiny bit with some indiscernible emotion, before smoothing back out, and flickering from Ron to her again. She felt worry surrounding her mind as he stared blankly at her for a moment, wondering suddenly what his father had said to him, what sort of thoughts he’d been turning over before he’d found his girlfriend underneath her ex. She steeled herself for the worst, knowing that after kissing Ron, she deserved nothing less than to be left in the proverbial ditch, and knowing that if Draco broke up with her, it would hurt worse than Ron’s betrayal ever had. Because it would be entirely her own fault.

Draco stared down at the brunette, the fear and guilt written clearly across her face, even as he kept his own a perfect mask of calmness. He’d managed to keep the mask in place throughout his father’s entire lecture, even with rage burning inside of him for the things his father hissed in the warded room. He’d learned of some plot, though no details had been offered, he’d learned that word of his new relationship had gotten back to his father. He’d learned that his father was still just as bigoted as ever, if not more so. And then, he’d learned that Hermione, the girl for which he’d concealed his true feelings from his father, the muggle-born that had changed his entire world, was alone with Ron Weasley, doing Merlin knew what. He’d found them as quickly as he could, the lie he’d told his father threatening to bring a world of bad karma back on him.

“It’s not serious, father. Just something to get under Pansy’s skin.” He’d said so flippantly, unable to stand up for the woman he loved in front of his father. Was this his comeuppance for lying? Was his heart to be broken as some cosmic revenge for being a coward?

He’d thought so, and he’d hexed Weasley, ready to face Hermione and hear that she was done with him. But she was saying she wasn’t, she was confessing her guilt, and clearly hoping for his forgiveness. Hermione was still claiming to love him, and he felt his heart squeeze painfully as he remembered his words to his father.

“I’ll end it if you like, father, but it’s a good bit of fun, really. Two girls nearly catfighting over me? And one so desperate for pureblood attention that she’s willing to overlook how much she hates me...”

“Hermione... I’m sorry.” He whispered, dropping his eyes to her lips, watching them press together as she swallowed to clear her throat, and moved to form words.

“Sorry? What do you have to be sorry for? I’m the one... who...” She trailed off, her mouth hanging open slightly, her brows creasing with worry as she looked up at him. “What did your father say to you, Draco?” She asked, her voice a worried whisper.

"Nothing I didn't already know. He hates you, and doesn't want me seeing you any longer." Draco slid his wand into his pocket and reached for her hand, finally letting his mask fall to show the disquiet of his own thoughts.

"Are... Are you going to do what he wants?" Hermione asked, her eyes nervous, her fingers clutching his like he was a life raft.

"Not bloody likely." Draco growled, feeling the anger at his father's demands mix with a childish desire to disobey. In one swift movement he wrapped his free hand around Hermione's waist and pulled her face to his, kissing her roughly in spite of everything his father had said, in direct defiance of his father's order to end the farcical relationship, and with great glee that Weasley was forced to watch, unable to lift a finger, as the girl they both wanted nearly dissolved in his arms, her hands reaching up to grasp white-blond hair, her lips parting easily under his, and her eyes fluttering closed as he held her body against his.

He knew it was just his imagination, but he fancied he could feel the hatred pouring from Weasley. He kept the kiss innocent enough, fighting back the urge to touch her more in front of her ex, just to prove a point, knowing she'd be angry with him as soon as she remembered their captive audience. He didn't want to get himself hexed, too.

"Wait, wait..." Hermione pulled away quickly, her cheeks glaringly red as she glanced ashamedly at her ex-lover. "Not in front of Ron."

"Alright." Draco agreed easily with a nod, knowing that the point had already been made. The Weasel had seen for himself that Hermione had chosen him. He'd disregarded his father's order to break things off with Hermione. He tried to keep the self-satisfaction from his smile as he laced his fingers with hers and pulled her toward the door.

"Aren't you going to un-jinx him?" Hermione asked, pulling him to a stop before he could pull the heavy wooden portal open.

"Soon as we're out the door." Draco agreed, pulling his wand free again, and pulling the door open a crack. He checked the corridor, making sure his father wasn't lurking about, and tugged Hermione through, pointing his wand back at Weasley for a moment before he snapped the door shut, the nonverbal spell already freeing the redhead from his invisible prison as Draco and Hermione headed back toward the library.

Hermione felt her cheeks blazing with self-conscious heat at the way she'd snogged Draco so openly in front of Ron. She'd totally forgotten he was there for a moment, and had latched onto Malfoy like a starving woman, so relieved had she been that he'd not cast her aside. She took deep, even breaths, trying to calm her racing heart. So much had happened in so short a time, her thoughts were a whirlwind. She tried to order them as she followed the blond back to their small study group.

She wasn't sure if she'd ever be able to speak to Ron civilly again, and her heart gave a small twinge of pain at the thought. If he wanted to apologize, she'd be willing to hear him out, but she wasn't sure he'd ever get over her being intimate with Malfoy, of all people. She may have just set the bridge of their friendship ablaze, and she could only hope that it would simply take time for him to come around. She'd snogged him, and admitted that to Draco, and still, it seemed like he wanted to be with her. She was filled with elation at his fidelity, but couldn't shut down the guilt that lingered in her chest. He hadn't actually said he'd forgiven her. Were they truly alright,

or was he just overlooking her foul actions to defy his father?

They were still a few shelves away from Ginny, Harry, and Goyle, but she pulled him to a halt, and he turned to face her, his brow arched inquisitively.

"I- I really am sorry, Draco. I don't know what I was thinking, it was just- He was just suddenly there, in my face, and- I know there's no excuse..."

"I... think I understand..." Draco mused, looking down at her with a contemplative stare, his face holding no spite or anger. Only a trace of sorrow.

"Can you forgive me?" She asked hopefully, holding her breath as he gave her another raised eyebrow.

"Well, that depends..." His lips twitched in a bit of a smile, and Hermione wondered what on earth he could find amusing.

"On?"

"You said you kissed him, so... Was it just one kiss, and he got carried away?" He asked, his eyes focusing on her like lasers. Hermione fought the urge to flinch.

"Yes."

"Swear on your Gryffindor pride it won't happen again?" His lips quirked once more.

"I swear." Hermione quickly agreed, knowing completely that she'd never want to kiss Ron again. Things would never be the same, even if her and Draco broke up, she didn't think she'd be able to trust Ron properly.

"Then I forgive you." His voice was low, sweet, and his smile playful.

"Are you sure?" Hermione asked, feeling a bit suspicious that he wasn't more upset. She'd suspected that Malfoy might've hexed everything in sight if presented with the scene he'd walked in on, including her.

"Should I go snog Pansy to make us even?" Draco asked, his smile twisting into an evil grin.

"No!" Hermione snapped, glaring up at him. Just the thought was enough to turn her stomach.

"Good, then. Stop feeling guilty about it, and just don't let it happen a second time." He retorted. She grabbed his arm before he could turn around.

"Aren't you angry?" She voiced her concern, watching his face for any sign of it.

"Furious." He smiled angelically at her, and leaned down, pressing a quick kiss to her lips before continuing. "Just not with you."

He pulled her to her friends' table before she could ask anything else, and released her hand only as she stepped over the bench.

"I'll see you later, there's someone I need to see quickly." He announced, ignoring the stares that Harry and Ginny gave. Goyle stood again, as if to follow Draco away from the table.

"You're not going to pick a fight, are you?" Hermione popped back up to her own feet, brows knitting together.

"Much as I'd like to, no. Not this instant. Maybe later, though... Goyle, you can stay with Potter if you like, or join Crabbe doing whatever he's up to. I'll come find you when I'm through."

"Sure." Goyle shrugged, obviously less offended by the way Draco dismissed him than the way Lucius had. Hermione sat quietly, watching both boys vanish from the library as she wondered about the one she was dating. Had he given Goyle the pretense of a choice just to save his feelings? Had he just manipulated his friend into leaving both himself, and their study group alone? And the way he managed to hide his fury, she shook her head, hoping beyond hope that he wouldn't come across Ron in the halls on his way to do... whatever. She also prayed that he wasn't about to go tattling on Ron's pushiness to Snape. The last thing any of them needed was more noses in their business. She pulled her essay toward her, dipped her quill in the inkpot, and tried to write, doing her best to let the worries fall to the back of her mind.

Draco walked briskly through the halls, veering away from Goyle the first chance he got, even though it had him going in the wrong direction. He kept his hands in the pockets of his trousers, where it was easier to hide the fists they'd become.

He wanted to hit something. Or someone. Between Weasley and his father, he was hard-pressed to leave Hermione's side. But he'd made sure she was with her friends, made sure Crabbe wouldn't stay to hear whatever she did or didn't tell them, and now he had to do something else for her.

He knocked on the office door with sharp, purpose-filled raps, and waited barely a second before the reply came.

"Come in."

He slid through the door, checking to make sure that the hall behind him was empty, and snapped it shut again.

"Mr. Malfoy. Is there something I can help you with?" Professor McGonagall asked, peering at him through her square spectacles, her face full of surprise at her unexpected visitor.

"Actually, I'd like to speak with the headmaster." Malfoy said, keeping his back straight, and his calm mask in place.

"Whatever for? Surely Professor Snape could-"

"No, it's... About my father. I'd really feel more comfortable speaking directly to Professor Dumbledore, if you don't mind." He put all the Malfoy chill he could into his voice, and did his best to peer down his nose at her, until she stood, and he had to look up to meet her gaze.

"I see. Wait here." She ordered, marching from the room with her own determination. When the door shut, and Draco was alone, he allowed himself to sag slightly, sliding into one of the chairs before her desk, and closed his eyes. He'd actually done it. She'd gone to fetch Dumbledore,

and there was no running away. He had to follow through...

Chapter 27: Blackout

Hermione followed her friends down to lunch, her bag slung over her shoulder, her eyes scanning the small groups of students for the one that hadn't come back that morning. He'd been gone, seeing whoever, for hours now, and she was starting to worry that though he'd said he'd forgiven her, he'd decided to ignore her, or worse, gotten into a fight with Ron, and gotten them both in trouble. As they entered the Great Hall, Hermione disproved one of her worries nearly instantly by finding the tall mop of red hair that sat at the Gryffindor table.

The blonde ringlets sat next to him, and Hermione glared daggers as she approached, sitting purposefully as far from them as she could get without being obviously evasive. Ron's blue eyes found hers, and he glared back for a moment, his face paling before he turned to Lavender, and gave her all the attention he never had for Hermione. The brunette Gryffindor scanned the Slytherin table, only to find it lacking. Where was he? What was he doing?

She was so focused on the table and its occupants she nearly shrieked when a body plopped down onto the bench next to her, straddling the seat in a casual, comfortable way.

"Draco!" She breathed, staring up into the pale face, wan smile, and nervous silver stare. "What's wrong? Where have you been?"

"I'll tell you after lunch. Meet me in the classroom? The one near the closet." He described cryptically, waiting for her nod before he stood, and carried himself to his house's table, tossing only the briefest of dirty looks at Ron.

"What classroom's that?" Harry asked intrusively, leaning across the table.

"The one filled with none of your business. Probably around the corner from the never you mind." Ginny chirped with a grin. Harry gave her a disapproving frown, but decided to focus his attention back on his lunch instead of questioning further.

"Thanks, Gin." Hermione offered the red-headed girl in an undertone. She was glad She had some help keeping her private life private. Merlin knew her own excuses and evasions were going a bit stale.

"No problem. He seemed sick or something. He alright?" Ginny shot her glance to the blond in question, and then back to Hermione in concern. Hermione felt tears welling up in her eyes, quite unexpectedly at her friend's unbiased worry.

"I'm not sure. I haven't seen him since he left us in the library. I hope he's alright." Hermione said, blinking away the heat in her eyes. Her morning had been much too rocky, and she really hoped that whatever Draco wanted to talk to her about wasn't going to be the tipping point of her dangerously teetering emotions.

Draco put food on his plate and pushed it around with his fork, barely eating three bites as he stared at the hourglass, waiting for an acceptable amount of time to have passed before he could leave again. He didn't look up when the headmaster entered, and managed not to glance too frequently at the Gryffindor table. He wanted to stare at Hermione, to reassure himself that

she was safe. The entire time he'd been in Professor McGonagall's office, he'd been thinking of her. Worried that Weasley would verbally bash her in front of her friends. Worried that his father might come searching for him again, and decide to have a 'chat' with her.

He took a sip of water, trying to keep his nausea at bay until he could gather her in his arms and feel for himself that she was still in one piece, unharmed.

"What's the matter Draco? You look ill." Blaise Zabini offered his unwanted commentary, his lip curling with distaste at the state of the Malfoy heir.

"Maybe I'll go to the hospital wing, then." Draco jumped on the opportunity and pushed away from the table, scurrying from the Great Hall as quickly as he could, ignoring the calls of worry and curiosity behind him at his sudden departure. He knew it wasn't right to leave his friends abruptly when they were obviously worried about him, but he couldn't bring himself to turn back and apologize. He had to get away from them, away from anyone who could send word to his father. Anyone who might be an unwanted pair of eyes and ears.

Hermione watched Draco disappear into the Entrance Hall not ten minutes after he'd arrived. He did look rather ill, and her stomach twisted with worry. She'd only ever seen him so upset over one thing before. Lucius Malfoy.

She bade her friends goodbye and followed him swiftly from the dining hall, not caring at all how suspicious it might look that she'd left so soon after him. Everyone already knew they were dating, who cared if they had a laugh over imagining the pair sneaking off to snog in some secret alcove?

She found their unused classroom quickly, and entered without hesitation.

A wand was pointed right in her face, and she froze in her tracks, staring at the wand, and then at Malfoy's stern face.

"Prove you're Hermione Granger." He said in a low, dangerous voice. Hermione swallowed, instantly worried. This was the same sort of precautions the Order had been using. Something had to be very wrong indeed if Malfoy was this worked up.

"The first time you told me to call you 'Draco' was in the dream." Hermione supplied, hoping it was sufficient proof. She wasn't certain he hadn't told anyone about the shared dream, but she certainly hoped he hadn't. The way his face relaxed, and he lowered his wand arm gave her all the confirmation she needed.

"What's going on? Where were you all morning?" She stopped herself from voicing the million other questions she wanted to ask. Just barely.

"I was talking to Professor Dumbledore." Draco answered into her hair, his arms circling her as soon as his wand was put away. Hermione wrapped her arms around his waist, her brow furrowing with instant alarm.

"What about?"

"My father. He... said something..." Malfoy sounded evasive, and Hermione hugged him tighter, trying to reassure him wordlessly. "He's planning something. I'm not sure exactly what, but he

said enough. Remember two years ago? Potter was going on about You-Know-Who nearly coming back? Apparently it was true, and my father was there. They're planning on trying again, I think."

"Oh, god." Hermione muttered, an involuntary shiver of horror running down her spine. She'd been one of the few to believe Harry, but she'd never thought that his followers would try again. Surely the monster was well and truly dead?

"Don't worry, you're going to be safe. I won't let it happen." Draco sounded completely sure of himself, and Hermione found it easy to believe him. He'd already confided in Dumbledore, and the old wizard would definitely have a plan. Voldemort would never rise again. They'd make sure of it.

Draco breathed in the scent of her, taking comfort in the warmth of her arms around him, the feeling of her chest moving with breath. She was safe, and alive. And he'd keep her that way, even if it meant betraying his father.

"He really wants you dead, you know?" Draco mumbled, still shaken by the words his father had spewed. "I'd thought all that pureblood rubbish was just a superiority complex, but... It's more."

"I'm sorry." Hermione sympathized, squeezing tighter. He basked in the tenderness she displayed. If she was the garbage his father thought, then he was Merlin himself.

"No, I'm sorry." Draco whispered, pulling back slightly to look in her eyes. He could count on one hand the times he'd offered apologies, and it seemed like half of them were to this bushy-haired vixen.

"What for?" Her expression was pure confusion, and he felt his lips quirk in a smile at how dense she was sometimes.

"For ever trying to be like him. For calling you a Mudblood. For not standing up to him when he insulted you to my face." He offered each of his sins to her, and her face never once held an ounce of revulsion.

"Apology accepted." She said it instantly, as though he'd committed no wrong in the first place.

"So easily?" He asked, feeling inept at the entire situation. Were apologies supposed to be like that? "You'll so quickly forgive that someone was berating your very existence, and I didn't say a word in your defence?"

"Yes! What could you have possibly said to change his mind? Nothing. There was nothing you COULD say." Hermione reassured him, proving further just how wrong his father had been. He'd be hard pressed to find a better person than her, let alone a better witch. He squeezed her to his chest once more and let his eyes drift shut, basking in the simple comfort of their embrace.

"It's enough that you admit he's wrong, that you told Dumbledore about his plotting. You, trying to stop his foulness despite the dangers it must hold if you're ever outed, in my mind, redeems any childish name calling or bad parenting." She mumbled into his chest, and his heart thumped madly in his chest as he thought of exactly that. What his father would do to him if he ever heard of today's betrayal. He'd be disowned, disinherited, and cursed in the very worst of ways. He'd

seen some of the dark magic his father knew, only a small fraction, but it was enough to make his palms sweat, and his veins pulse with each hard heartbeat.

"Oh Merlin... He's going to kill me..." He couldn't feel the air in his lungs, only fire, and instead of the girl he loved, and the classroom they stood in, all he saw was black. He heard her voice calling his name for a brief moment, and then that too faded into a drumming heartbeat and pulsing darkness.

Hermione felt him swaying in her arms moments before he collapsed, and just barely managed to catch his sudden weight, keeping him from bouncing his skull off the stone floor. She lowered him to the ground as gently as she could, calling his name, and touching his slack face. There was a light sheen of sweat across his forehead, his lips were pale, and his cheeks were flushed. She slapped him gently across the cheek, calling his name once more, but nothing seemed to rouse him.

She felt panic clog her throat, and she pushed herself back to her feet, and bolted from the room, heading to the nearest person she knew could help. She made it halfway up the corridor before she ran smack into the black-clad figure she'd been running for.

"Granger! Five points from Gryffindor for running in the halls." He sneered, his eyes narrowing shrewdly at her in distaste.

"Professor. Come quick. Malfoy's fainted." She panted, grabbing at his sleeve, and tried to tug him along after her. As soon as her words registered, his feet moved, his ebony hair and cloak flapping behind him as he strode hastily after her, following her summons straight to the pale figure still sprawled on the floor.

He knelt down beside him, and Hermione stood back, biting her nails as he inspected Draco's face, pulse, and eyes.

"Will he be alright?" Hermione asked after a few moments, worried by the potion master's silence.

"He'll be fine. What happened here?" He asked, his nostrils flaring as he faced her, as though he could smell the past. Hermione flushed dark red at the thought that maybe he was searching for the hint of lingering passion.

"We were speaking, he became agitated, and he collapsed." Hermione replied, her eyes darting from Snape's piercing black gaze to Malfoy's unconscious face. He looked to be regaining a bit of his color, but showed no signs of coming to.

"Speaking about what?" Snape demanded, flowing to his feet, and pinning her to the spot with another nasty glare.

"His father..." Hermione disclosed, looking down at her lover, so she wouldn't have to meet that unnerving stare.

"I suppose he was blabbering about what he confided in the Headmaster?" Snape sneered, his eyes never leaving her. She simply nodded in response. "I'll take him to the Hospital Wing. You go back to lunch, and don't run your mouth, girl. As far as I'm concerned too many people already know."

"Yes, sir." Hermione breathed, watching him magically lift Draco, and ferry him from the room, before she began trudging her way back up to Gryffindor Tower. She didn't really feel like continuing lunch, and as her fear for Draco's health was dwindling, it left her feeling tired, and weak. The day was only half over, and it felt like it'd begun a lifetime ago. She'd woken up in Draco's arms, had a lovely bedside breakfast, and then everything had gone downhill. Ron had tried to rape her. Draco's father wanted her dead. Voldemort was threatening to rise once more.

Before she knew it, her vision had blurred, and she barely managed to hold off tears until she reached her bed. She pulled her curtains closed, and slid underneath her blankets, harsh, overwrought sobs shaking her as the day finally hit its breaking point. She buried her face in her pillow, and let her body release what her mind didn't want to process.

Draco's eyes fluttered open, and the first thing he realized was that it was still dark. The second was that he wasn't alone. Hermione's frizzy hair was tickling his hand, her head resting on folded arms, her eyes closed tight, and for the second time in his life, he saw her sleeping soundly next to him. Granted, she was sitting in a chair, her head lying on his hospital bed, but it made his heart stutter all the same. He brushed stray hair from her cheek, and watched her sleep a moment, drinking in the sight of her.

He'd seen her relaxed as only one could be after being consumed for hours by pleasures of the flesh. He'd seen her petrified in a hospital bed in second year. He'd seen her knocked unconscious by one scrap, or spell, or another. But before the previous night, he'd never seen her truly asleep. He'd never before seen the tiny crease that divided her brow, the slight twitch of her fingers, or the heavy, slow breathing that made him want to drift back to sleep himself, curled tight around her.

He let his hand stroke along her head, feeling the rather coarse hair, the soft cushion of thick curls that gave slightly under his palm. She stirred slightly, her eyes fluttering open, and she sat up, stretching her arms skyward in a way that pulled her cotton shirt tight across her chest. Draco gazed unabashedly at her form for a moment, and smiled across at her sleep-filled eyes. The nap had made her hair messier than usual, and he felt his smile widen, loving how she looked as she blinked owlishly in his direction.

"You're awake?" She asked rhetorically, covering her yawn.

"So are you. Shouldn't you be in bed." He glanced at the large clock above the ward's door, and saw it was slightly past midnight.

"Probably, but I couldn't sleep." She shrugged. He didn't mention that she'd been sleeping fine a moment ago.

"How'd I end up in the Hospital Wing?" He asked instead.

"You... erm... fainted." Hermione said, giving him a sympathetic look, as his face flushed with sudden mortification.

"No..." He shook his head, as though denying it could turn back the clock. He couldn't have fainted. Malfoys did NOT swoon.

"No one else knows, don't worry. Well, no one besides Snape..." She muttered, looking down to

her hands.

"What do you mean?" He asked, his brows pulling together. Snape? Had she told him what they'd been talking about? Had Snape already gotten word to his father of their ongoing relationship? He felt his breathing accelerate, and his hands curled into fists.

"Well, when you collapsed, I thought something might be wrong with you, so I went for help, and found Professor Snape. He made sure you were okay, and brought you up here." Hermione explained.

"Did you tell him what I told you?" He asked, fear making the words harsher than they should have been.

"He already knew."

Draco cursed his own stupidity. "Of course. He's a Legilimens."

"He is?" Hermione asked, surprised. "I know Dumbledore is a skilled Legilimens, but I never thought Snape... Anyway, that wasn't it. It seemed as though Dumbledore had already told him."

"What!?" Draco nearly leapt from the bed, desperate to hunt down the Headmaster and demand why he was telling his father's Death Eater friends that he knew of their plans.

"Calm down, Draco." Hermione's warm hand was on his arm, and he stared into her deep brown eyes, taking comfort in the calm there. "He's not going to sell you out to your father. He's... on our side." Hermione said it with only a brief pause, but long enough for Draco to see the flicker of mistrust in them. Did she not fully believe that Snape was on their side? Or did she not quite trust the he himself was?

"Are you sure?" He asked, lacing his fingers through hers. "He and my father used to be incredibly close."

"As sure as I can be. Dumbledore trusts him, and every time Harry's suspected him of foul play, it's never been the case." She explained. Draco smirked, imagining Potter hunting Snape through the dark halls, trying to catch him in any sort of misconduct.

"I guess we'll know for certain, when my father either does or doesn't hear about this." He tried to relax back into his pillows, but could feel his muscles still filled with tension, his mind still whirling with worry.

"So why'd you come down here if you couldn't sleep?" He asked, hoping to distract his mind from the dangerous outcomes of the game he played.

Hermione lowered her eyes once more, pink spread across her face, and he barely heard her whispered answer. "I thought I'd be able to sleep if you were there."

"It seems you did manage that." He nodded, enjoying the coy look on her face in the darkened room. She so easily lost herself in the passion, but when confronted with her feelings in an open conversation, she always turned bashful. He thought it was a rather charming quality.

"Are you feeling better, then?" Hermione asked, quickly changing the subject. He smirked down at her evasion.

"Much better. In fact, I think I feel well enough to leave this damned bed." He swung his legs over the edge, and slid to his feet before she could protest, enjoying how she stood instantly, her hands gripping him worriedly.

"Don't! You could collapse again." She worried, her hands on his waist, helping to steady him should he fall.

"I'm not going to collapse." He sneered without venom. He pulled her closer, pressing her body to his, and wrapped his arms around her back to secure her in place. "I bet I could get YOU to collapse though." He purred in his most devious tone.

"Oh..." Her voice was quiet, but he heard the hesitation there, and tilted his head back slightly to look at her. Her brow was crinkled with worry, and her eyes were fixed firmly on his chest.

"What's wrong?" He asked, loosening his grip, instantly on alert.

"It's nothing." She quickly asserted, but wouldn't meet his gaze. He searched what he could see of her face, noted her hands balled into fists around his nightshirt, and the way she leaned away from him, ever so slightly.

"Something's wrong. Tell me." He kept his voice low, soothing, and brought a hand up to stroke her hair again, doing his level best not to scare her off. She looked about three inches from fleeing like a rabbit.

She shook her head mutely, and he saw the most horrifying thing he'd ever witnessed. Tears were forming in her eyes. He could see them sparkling on her lashes, and he felt his heart tighten, and drop.

"It's been a rough day, that's all." Hermione muttered, looking to the side, uncomfortably.

"Is this about Weasley?" Draco asked knowingly, loosening his grip further, and leaning back to look more fully at her. She glanced up at him nervously, but said nothing, confirming his suspicions. "I told you I'm not upset with you." He tried to reassure her, but she pulled further away, breaking out of his arms, and sat on his bed, staring at the floor.

"It's not that." She opened and closed her mouth a few times, obviously trying to speak, but nothing came out. Draco sat next to her, and waited, full of anxiety, but said nothing. Had she thought more about it, and decided to change her mind about taking the weasel back?

"He just wouldn't stop, you know? He wasn't listening to me, or- or... paying any attention to the real me. He knew what he thought I wanted, and, I was afraid that- that he'd..." She trailed off, a haunted look on her face, and Draco could see tears welling in her eyes. He slowly wrapped an arm around her shoulders, testing to see if she pulled away. To his surprise, she leaned into his chest, wrapped her arms around him, and began sobbing. He froze, holding her delicately, not sure what to do. He'd never really had to deal with a truly upset woman before. Pansy only ever fake cried to get her way, and he always just ignored her. But this was Hermione Granger. He didn't think he'd ever seen her cry this horribly before. A few tears of distress now and then, sure, but not these body-wracking sobs.

He tentatively rubbed her back, and made gentle cooing noises, as his mother used to when he'd fall and skin his knee. It seemed to work, as her sobs slowed to hiccoughs, and she began sniffing every so often. He closed his eyes, new worries filling him. All he could see were all the dangers that threatened her, inside and out of the castle. At least Weasley he could deal with, head on.

"Shh, you need to sleep, love," he murmured, pulling the girl more fully onto his bed, and hugging her to his chest as they got comfortable. Her sniffles became less frequent, her breathing evened out, and eventually, her hands unclenched from the fists they were in as she fell asleep in his arms for the second time. He stroked her hair, taking comfort in the deep restful rising and falling of her chest. She was breathing, she was resting, and most importantly, she was completely unconscious. He knew she'd be even more upset if she woke up and he was missing, but he'd slept too much already and had things to research; so he slipped carefully from under her, covered her with the sheets, and snuck from the hospital wing, heading straight for the library.

Chapter 28: Chit-Chat

Hermione woke groggily, her eyes feeling sticky as she tried to pry them open. She looked around the hospital wing confused, taking a moment to recall the previous night. Draco had gone from horndog to perfect gentleman in the space of a single hesitation, and he'd surprised her with how well he managed to comfort her. Unlike Ron, he actually seemed able to read her receptiveness, and act accordingly. Unlike Ron, he'd stopped immediately when she sounded even a bit uninterested. Unlike Ron, he actually knew what he was doing.

"Miss Granger, are you feeling unwell?" Madam Pomfrey's voice startled her into looking up from the sheet's she'd been staring blankly at, and scrambled from the bed.

"Oh, no, I'm fine, just a bit of... erm... needed a bit of quiet. My dorm mates were tittering like fools half the night, and I needed some peace." She stumbled over the excuse, but after a measuring stare, the Matron nodded, moved around her to begin cleaning up the bed.

"It is always quiet in here at night. Quite restful, one of the many reasons I love my position." Madam Pomfrey agreed, going about her work as Hermione began slinking toward the door.

"Thank you." She replied awkwardly as she ducked into the hallway, her mind filled with nervous curiosity. Where had Draco disappeared to? Probably back to his dorm, to save face after passing out yesterday. She headed toward Gryffindor tower, hoping no one caught her in the halls in her nightclothes.

So far, he'd created the thin silver chain, and the potion. The potion was a thick black brew, but shined like spilled oil, and shimmered like black satin. He slowly lowered the chain into the liquid, careful to keep his fingers out of it, and removed the length,, letting it drip the excess off for a few moments, until the silver chain had stopped dripping black, and simply looked like shiny black metal. He draped it over his wrist delicately, being absolutely precise in his movements, so the black wouldn't smudge. It wouldn't mess up the spell at all, but it would look sloppy afterward, if he was careless. 0

Draco had no idea what he was doing. The spell seemed easy enough, but he'd never

performed one quite so intricate before. The finishing touches weren't complex, but it was strange. He'd snuck through the restricted section, found the texts he needed, and hidden away in the room of requirement, trying to find and do exactly what he wanted.

"With this chain, I connect; with this brew, I bind. My skin to hers, a burning I need, should she need me." He read from the text, hoping it worked, but feeling a bit dubious that it was written in plain English.

A flash of heat seared his skin, and he hissed in pain, flinching slightly as the chain jumped to life, circled his wrist, and sealed itself seamlessly. He stared in fascination as the black slowly slid from the silver, leaving it pristine one more. All he could see was silver and pale skin, and as he turned his wrist over, the burning sensation eased, leaving him feeling successful. It seemed to have worked.

He pulled out his wand and tapped a single link of the chain, clearly enunciating the next bit of the spell, and watched as the link he'd tapped and the one next to it formed a clasp. He opened it, and pulled the little chain from his wrist, staring in wonder at the black imprint underneath. A perfect replica of the chain, soaked into his own skin, binding him to the bracelet. And since the chain he'd used was so thin, it was barely noticeable at all. If he wished to cover it, any other circlet or sleeve would work. He pulled his sleeve back down over his wrist, pocketed the bracelet, and cleared up the evidence of his magic. The spell was controversial, and many noble, hotheaded Gryffindors might accuse one of black magic if they found out. He didn't need any more trouble than he was already diving into.

Draco found her in the library, her head bent over a book, her brow furrowed in concentration. She was alone, and he sighed with relief as he approached, and took a seat next to her.

"Hermione, I-"

"Where have you been!?" Her voice was a whisper, but her head had whipped in his direction, and her tone was full of worry and irritation.

"I was busy." He waved the question away, and continued before her clearly agitated expression could form more words. "I got you something."

He pulled the thin chain from his pocket, and held it out to her. She stared at it a moment, looked at his face, and looked back to the chain suspiciously.

"Why?"

"I can't just give you jewelry?" He asked, smirking knowingly at her. They both knew it wasn't just a piece of metal, and he felt a swell of pride at her shrewdness. She wasn't likely to accept any cursed items from his father, then, either.

"You disappear for hours, after learning about some great plot, and come back, SUDDENLY offering gifts of a totally nondescript, and innocuous nature? I doubt it. If you'd wished to present me with jewelry as a gift to represent your intentions or feelings it would be something gaudy and overdone that I would likely be embarrassed to wear, not a rather plain bracelet that no one is likely to notice."

"Hmph." He snorted a bit at her dissection of his habits, but didn't contradict her. "Fine, it's charmed." He admitted. "What with my father plotting to have you murdered, I figured it would be a good idea to offer you a bit of security."

"Security?" She eyed the bracelet questioningly, and he nodded.

"It's nothing too complicated." He lied with a suave shrug, "Just wear it, and if you ever need me, for any reason, touch it, and will me to your side. If I'm able to apparate, I'll be able to apparate directly to the bracelet, if there's wards preventing it, like those covering Hogwarts, I'll be able to find you on foot."

"That's... A bit invasive, don't you think?" She asked, eyeing the small chain with even more distrust.

"Not at all. It'll only work if you want it to. The charm is inactive until you need it, and if it makes you uncomfortable, you can always take it off, but there's no way for me to locate you unless you touch it, and think about me coming to you." He said, making sure it was clear that he wouldn't just sense she was in danger.

"I see..." She hesitantly took the bracelet between her thumb and forefinger, and inspected it closer, as if looking for poison, or physical magic on it. "What's the spell called?" She asked, her eyes finding his face. He opened his mouth to answer, but no lie came to him.

"I knew it! It's not just some simple charm, or you'd have no problem telling me. What is it Draco, dark magic?" she hissed inquisitively, dropping the chain to the table instantly, as if burned.

"No. A bit... questionable, maybe, but not dark." He tried to reassure her. "And if at any time I wish to undo my half of the charm, I'm more than capable of disconnecting myself from the bracelet."

"I see..." She drawled thoughtfully, staring down at the chain. "Are you sure you've researched it properly?" She asked, her brows knitted together with worry.

"I was up all night researching it. There has been no recorded case of this spell harming anyone, or otherwise causing mayhem. It's just to ease my mind." He assured her. He kept his face a perfect semblance of healthy concern. It wouldn't do to let her know that there was no way to unbind himself from the spell, unless the bracelet was destroyed. He'd fight that battle if it came to it, and not a moment sooner.

"Alright... Will it work if I don't wear it? If I keep it in my pocket?" She inquired.

"It should. Though it'll be easier to grab from your wrist." He muttered, watching as she scooped it off the desk, and slid it into her pocket.

"Well, I'll carry it like this until I've done my own research. If I find nothing to worry about, I promise I'll wear it normally." She compromised. He nodded, a small smile stretching his lips as he leaned in, wanting nothing more than to kiss her. Her eyes seemed to twinkle in the soft lamplight, full of glee as he leaned in, and anticipation. They were alone at their little table, but besides the other day in front of Weasley, he'd never been courageous enough to kiss her where anyone might see. He could feel his heart thumping madly in his chest, the beat filling his

ears as his lips hovered right above hers-

"A-hem." The fake cough jolted through his ears like ice water, and he jerked back from Hermione, twisting around on the bench, his face a blazing red, to face his head of house.

"Professor, we were just, erm... just..."

"Yes, I can imagine." The tall dark-haired wizard said with no enthusiasm. "Apparently you and I need to have a word about what is and isn't appropriate behavior for school children. My office. Now." He waited for Draco to stand before he swept away, imperious, and unconcerned about the ruined atmosphere.

"I suppose I'll see you at lunch, then?" She asked hopefully, standing with him, and staring up into his eyes with longing.

"I suppose you will." He agreed confidently, and leaned down to peck her quickly on the lips before he had to follow after Snape, hurrying from the library at a pace that could just barely be called 'not running'.

He caught up with Snape and fell into step beside him, looking properly contrite as he followed the potions master through the halls, down the stairs, and all the way to his dungeon office. He kept his lips firmly closed together until Snape waved his wand, erecting wards, sound dampening charms, and a few incantations Draco didn't recognize.

"So it appears you're foregoing your father's instruction to quit Granger?" the bat-like man sneered across his desk.

"Yes. Tell him if you like, but I'm not changing my mind." Draco dared, keeping his back straight, and his mind blank.

"I'll tell him nothing." Snape spat, glaring. "If you're so keen to have her murdered, tell him yourself. Otherwise, I suggest we both keep our mouths shut about the matter, and if you know what's good for you both, you'll go back to sneaking around out of sight."

"Beg pardon?" Draco snapped, equal parts furious that Severus Snape would say such a thing, and horrified that he seemed to know how they'd started the whole thing.

"You heard me. If your father finds out you've disobeyed him, for her, you think he won't find a way to get rid of the problem? He's never been one to sit back and wait for what he wants to happen. He's a man who makes it happen. Always has been, and now, it would seem that what he wants is to bring the Dark Lord back to power. You were just a babe at his downfall, so you can't imagine the sort of horror that would be, but I assure you, your future is now more complicated than you can imagine."

"What do you mean?" Draco asked, imagining himself and Granger having to hide away in the muggle world, or being forced to leave the country.

"Right now, your future is lying before you, with several different paths laid out at your feet. No matter which you choose, I fear your childhood is over. Nothing will be simple. Nothing will be safe. Do you understand?"

"I'm afraid I don't." Draco responded, sitting back limply in his chair, clinging to his obliviousness just a moment longer.

"You told the headmaster that your father plans to resurrect the Dark Lord. If that's true, then he must be stopped. The Headmaster is already on a mission to prevent that from happening, but... He can't do everything himself. There are places he can't reach, people he can't persuade. I helped him, during the last war, to reach those places, to get around those people. But... I'm no longer as trusted as I once was. I no longer have the familiarity to properly assist him. But I believe you can help.

"Draco, your father is a powerful man. He doesn't trust easily, or fully. However, you're his son. The fact that he mentioned his plans to you at all, means he wishes you to join the fold. He will trust you, if you can convince him you wish to follow. You can thwart him from the inside."

"Wait, you... You're saying you want me to betray my own father? To... Get closer to him, and then obstruct his plans?" Draco chewed the words out, feeling his heart squeeze painfully. He already felt enough guilt for having exposed his father's plans. Now Snape was suggesting a long-term con?

"Draco, there are two outcomes to our actions. The first, your father doesn't succeed, the Dark Lord never rises again, and the wizarding world is protected that much longer, until some other insane power rises with false ideals. The second, the Dark Lord does rise, darkness and chaos take over our world, you're forced into servitude to him, or killed for treachery. Your little know-it-all is hunted, and killed, especially so for poisoning you, for being friends with the Dark Lord's nemesis, Harry Potter. Both have their hardships, but I can assure you which will be the easiest outcome to bear, regardless of what it takes to get there. It's your father who is plotting the downfall of our world, and unfortunately, that means it will be you who is forced to suffer, either way.

"You can either sit back, and let things unfold without putting your lot into either side, and wait to see how things turn out before declaring an allegiance, or you can work to make the world you want to live in. Alternatively, you can take your bushy-haired muggle-born, steal your father's money, and disappear forever."

Draco thought he saw a flicker of emotion in Snape's eyes, but if it was there at all, it was gone before he could name it.

"I can't. I don't have access to the Malfoy vault until I inherit the rest of the Malfoy property. Which won't happen unless I get married and have a son, father hands it over, or he dies. And I'll let you guess which is most likely to happen first." Draco spat with venom. His father would never agree to hand over the Malfoy fortune and live on an allowance unless he was forced to do so. Just as his father had done, and his grandfather...

"Are you already planning on marrying her, then?" Snape asked, seeming to read parts of Draco's mind that even he hadn't explored.

"No... Well, I've never really thought of who I'd marry, but... If I did marry Granger..."

"You'd be disinherited before you even had a chance to ask for a blessing." Snape finished, nodding solemnly. "So, that leaves us with the only two other options: wait to see how things go, or fight back."

"I... I'm not sure I can betray my family like that..." Draco stuttered, feeling his heart torn, once again, between what he'd come to love, and the obligation of his family.

"You would only be alone for as long as it took to bring me in." Snape assured him, leaning over the desk, his eyes burning like coal, his hands clenched together. Draco stared at him, feeling his heart break as the possibilities laid themselves out before him. His professor had been right when he'd said this would be the end of his childhood. This would be the end of any innocence he had left. If it didn't break him, though, he could be with her. However long they wanted, they could be together. If his father was outed as a supporter of this scheme, he'd be thrown in Azkaban, and the Malfoy legacy would fall immediately to Draco. He couldn't be disowned if his father was in Azkaban. She couldn't be murdered if he failed to bring back He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. If it didn't break him, there was only one thing he could see to be done.

"I expect you already have a plan?" He asked, straightening his spine, and solidifying his resolve. She believed he could change for the better. So he would do the right thing. For her.

"Publically break things off with Granger. I don't care if you plan it out ahead of time, but make sure she appears to be hurt. The nastier the better, make sure your father hears about it, and believes that you felt nothing for her. If you plan it out, tell her to cry. Maybe run off in tears. Then, you owl your father telling him that you've done as he asked, I can help with exactly what to say, and wait for a response. Be the perfectly devoted son, and do not ask about his plan unnecessarily, as that would only make him believe something was afoot. Wait until HE brings it up again, and then gently ask if there's any way you can help. Don't push, don't be obnoxious, just be the image of a respectful and loyal son. He will bring you in, I assure you. Now, I'm going to let you in on the secret, and you must not, under ANY circumstances let him know you're aware of what I'm about to tell you. Understood? You know nothing about this, and when he tells you, it'll be your first time hearing about it at all."

"Understood."

"There are certain items that are well guarded that hold pieces of the Dark Lord's soul. Each one has the ability to bring him back. We believe there are seven in total." Snape began under his breath, as if someone might be listening through the wall and wards he'd spelled. "Two have already been destroyed. We haven't a clue how many your father was given for safekeeping, but he's already tried once. I can give you details about what sort of items we expect, so you can keep an eye out for them. If you come across any, you're to bring them straight to the headmaster, or myself to be destroyed. Without giving yourself away, if possible. We want the chance to extract as many items as possible without being found out. Potter is on the same mission, but he and the headmaster are searching for those a bit less guarded. You're not to speak to Potter of this, or let him know you're on the same side at all, is that clear?"

"Crystal clear."

"Good. Go and end things with Granger, and we'll take things from there." Snape ordered, waving a hand to his door dismissively. Draco sat for a moment longer, trying to wrap his mind around the whole conversation, trying to settle his new double life somewhere inside his soul, but it didn't seem to want to fit. He stood, and offered his hand to his professor.

"I'm glad you'll be watching my back, professor." He said somberly, certain that he'd fail on his own. Snape stood and took his hand, shaking it briskly, his eyes darting down to peer at their

joined hands.

"What's this?" He pulled Draco's hand closer to his face, making Draco step right into the side of his desk, banging his knee as the dark haired man peered at the black stain that matched the chain resting in Granger's pocket. His finger swept over it, and instantly, Snape's demeanor changed. He looked furious, and he dropped Draco's hand, lip twitching as he spoke.

"Have you any idea what that is, boy?"

"Just... A protection spell." He stammered, feeling like the man he'd just become during their last conversation had vanished, leaving behind the small schoolboy who knew nothing in the face of this man's anger.

"A protection spell? How dense are you? It's a spell of servitude. Whoever holds this power over you can call you on a whim. There's no undoing this, you realize? Did your father do this to you?"

"It can be undone." Draco argued. "I'd just have to destroy the bracelet."

"You'd have to obtain it, first. You really think that whoever holds it would give up such power easily?"

"She would. She'd give it up in a heartbeat." Draco replied. "I did it to myself. To keep her safe."

"You are the most foolish-" Snape cut his words off, and seemed to ponder. "Pray she never uses it, Draco. It's not a pleasant sensation."

"Have you done it before, then? Is that how you recognize it?" Draco asked, peering inquisitively across at the older man.

"This was the base spell that the Dark Lord used to Mark his followers." Snape stated, letting the words sink in. "Find something to cover this mark, something only you can remove, and never let anyone see it. It would provoke too many questions."

"I will." Draco consented, adding it to the growing list of things necessary for his double life to begin.

"Go. Do as I've said." Snape directed, sitting back in his chair, still glaring. Draco kept his pace even and calm as he exited, wanting nothing more than to race from the room. He wanted to be alone, to think, but he had no time. He had to find Granger, and arrange their end.

A/N: Thank you all for the comments, I'm expecting one more chapter. Sorry about how long it took to get this chapter done, I recently lost my furbaby, and was having a hard time doing much of anything. Hopefully I'll be back in the swing, and uploading the final chapter next month

Chapter 29: The Beginning of the End

Hermione marched into the Great Hall for dinner amongst her classmates, her eyes scanning the crowds immediately for the silvery hair that was so instantly recognizable. He was already

seated at his table, surrounded by his house, and she took her own seat, surrounded by gold and crimson.

"Hermione, what's with you? You're not paying attention at all!" Ginny yelled, as Hermione knocked the water pitcher over for the second time that day, her hand shaking slightly as she helped to sop up the mess.

"Sorry, just a bit... worried. Draco hasn't spoken to me all day..." She worried aloud, her brows pulling together as she once more gazed across the tables that separated them. He hadn't even looked at her since she'd entered, and she felt her chest tighten with the discomfort of doubt. She squeezed her eyes shut, trying to calm herself, reminding herself that he cared for her, that he'd made her a magical bracelet so she'd never have to be truly on her own. They would overcome the difficulty his father presented, and they would overcome anything else that came.

"I'm going to go see if something's wrong." She announced, as the first slow trickle of people began leaving the Great Hall. She'd barely eaten anything, her stomach was tying itself in knots, and she felt her fingers trembling again as she approached the den of snakes.

"Draco, can I have a word?" She asked, glancing around at his friends pointedly.

"Just one? That must be difficult for you. Go on then, what's this word you want to share?" He sneered, turning around to lean his back against the table, arms folded across his chest as he stared haughtily up at her. She felt her breath freeze in her chest at the sight of his face. He wore an expression of ice and malice, an expression she hadn't seen in so long, she'd nearly forgotten he could make it. She took a breath, and clenched a handful of her robes to hide her shaking.

"You've been avoiding me all day, Draco. Have I done someth-"

"That's more than a word, Granger. If it's nothing important, can you please let me get on with dinner?"

"It looks like you've already finished." She scoffed, eyeing the empty plate behind him with a raised eyebrow. She turned her gaze back to him, pleading. "Please, can't we go somewhere to speak?"

"Why? I've never wanted to hear you speak before, what makes you think I'd start now? Just because I paid you a bit of attention? Don't get the wrong idea, Granger."

"Wrong idea? But I thought-"

"You thought wrong. I can't believe you actually fell for it! How dull could you be? You really thought that I would want to be with you? You're a mess, Granger, look at yourself! Have you even brushed your hair since first year?"

"Draco, please..." Hermione heard the pitiful sound of her quiet voice, felt the hot tears pricking her eyes. She stared into his face, searching for any trace of the decent man he'd been transforming into, any sign that he might still care for her. She found only mocking derision.

"Please what? Give you a pity tumble? I'm not sure I could stomach another moment of letting your filthy fingers touch me, you pathetic Mudblood." He hissed, leaning in so only those closest

to him would hear. Hermione felt the tears dripping down her cheeks at those words, the evil smile that twisted his face, the way that his friends seemed to be hooting and yammering behind him with fresh insults for her, none of which she heard. She couldn't hear anything over the sound of her heartbeat filling her ears, and she could hardly see where she was going as she ran out the door of the Great Hall, and up the stairs. She pushed past a few Hufflepuffs in the Entrance Hall, wiping at her face, and disappeared behind a tapestry that would lead her halfway across the second floor.

She tried to calm the sobs that were fighting to burst from her chest, and she slipped into a lavatory, bracing her hands against a sink, and trying to stem the flow of tears that didn't want to stop. His words had cut deep, but the look on his face had been the worst part.

After several minutes of trying to gulp down deep breaths to no avail, she still felt breathless. The sound of the door opening had her spinning around, wand in hand, mouth already telling whoever it was to get out.

"It's me." The soft voice announced, as a second wand waved around, muffling their voices, and barring the door. "I'm so sorry, I didn't mean it."

"I know." Hermione choked out, staring at the anxious silver eyes set into a concerned face. Draco ran a hand through his hair, unconsciously trying to smooth it back as he approached her. "I told you to say whatever you had to, I just wasn't expecting it to actually hurt so much." She admitted, watching him warily, part of her worried that that cold wretch would reappear, and never leave.

"I know, but I still feel like an absolute ogre for what I said. This is going to be harder than I thought. I very nearly came after you, to see if you were alright." Draco admitted, leaning his hip against the sink next to hers, as she began running cool water to rinse her face with.

"I thought you had, with how fast you got here. How'd you get away without causing suspicion?" She queried as she bent over the sink, hoping he hadn't blown his cover so soon.

"Told them I'd lost my appetite, and wanted a bath before bed, as usual. With a few more insults to your presence thrown in." he answered, looking around the unfamiliar room. "What made you decide we should meet here, anyway?"

"No one comes here." Hermione answered between splashes of cold water. "There's a ghost. Good place to hide."

"And this ghost isn't going to turn us in?"

"I brewed Polyjuice Potion in here our second year, and never got caught." She said as an example of the lavatory's privacy. He nodded, looking duly surprised as she dabbed her face dry.

"Hermione..."

She pulled the towel away from her face to see him standing right in front of her, so close she could easily wrap her arms around him. His fingers brushed the bottom of her still-damp chin, bringing her eyes to his as he stared down at her, his face solemn.

"I really am sorry I said those things. I love you. I love your messy hair, and the feel of your fingers touching me. I imagine I'll have to say all manner of things I don't mean before this is over, and I just want to make sure you know what's real." His eyes were soft as he spoke, full of feeling, and she sank against him, soaking in the warmth of his chest, splaying her fingers across his back.

"I know what's real." Hermione assured him, breathing in the familiar scent of his robes, memorizing it. They had the rest of the school year to be together, even if it was behind closed doors, secreting around at night, pretending to hate each other by day. They still had this.

She pulled him tighter to her, wanting to be as close to him as possible for as long as possible. Their time was limited, and she wanted to spend every possible second of it memorizing what she wouldn't be able to afterward. She didn't know if they'd find other people to date and possibly spend their lives with, but she knew for certain that when they left on the Hogwarts Express, her heart would be broken all summer.

She stood on her tiptoes and pressed a kiss to his lips, squeezing her eyes shut, and banishing such melancholy thoughts of the future. He was here now, she was here, and they had so little time to waste on weeping over their impossible romance. She kissed him with a fierceness she'd hide from her children if they ever asked about her childhood loves. Her fingers tangled in his hair, and she gasped in a breath as he pushed her hips into the edge of the sink behind her and kissed her senseless, taking her own approach to avoiding the intimidating tasks that lie ahead of them.

It was so familiar to begin undressing him, she almost didn't realize her hands were doing it, almost didn't feel the way her own robes were hoisted above her hips. She did feel the full impact of his heated shaft pressing against her stomach. She fully felt the velvety skin under her fingers, the harsh squeezing hands that twirled her to face the mirror and yanked her knickers down. She knew exactly the feel of the teasing prod of his cock at her entrance. He hesitated, one hand on her hip, the other holding his twitching erection in place as his eyes met hers in the mirror.

"Please?" He implored, searching the reflection of her face for any sign that she didn't want his touch. She felt her heart swell with love for him as she answered his entreaty by slowly tipping back, sliding right onto him, and enveloping him to the hilt as his hand made way, and came to rest opposite his other.

"It seems like I'm a dirty little secret after all." She teased, relishing the enraptured look on his face as she moved forward and back slowly, setting a torturous pace for him to suffer.

"If I didn't know better, I'd say you prefer sneaking around, Granger. Pretending there's nothing between us but unresolved tension... Such a disappointment it'll be when we're married, and everyone knows exactly what we're doing." His words were the same taunting tone he'd used to humiliate her delightfully before, but his words were different, and as they sank in, she froze, staring into his quicksilver eyes, unable to mistake the possessiveness she saw, or deny the thrill she got from their clandestine relationship. But the last of his words sent her mind whirring confusingly as he pleased her, his actions muddling her thoughts, but the lingering sensation of his voice nearly forcing her to reply.

"Married?" She managed to gasp, taking back up the motion when he froze, realizing what he'd let slip. Their eyes met in the mirror, waiting for each other to wave the word away as a simple

mistake, but the longer neither spoke, the further over her he bent, until her pulled her head to the side, and kissed her, unwilling to lie and say he'd misspoken, but unable to make any promises. She kissed him back, her fingers sliding slightly across the wet edges of the porcelain sink, her hips moving against his of their own accord, getting swifter with each motion, desperately seeking the first of many climaxes she knew were to come.

As his head pulled back, and he groaned with pleasure, wrapping his arm around her hips so his fingers could help her along, she thought she saw a flicker of movement from the corner of her eye, from the window where Moaning Myrtle liked to lounge, but as she reached that zenith, she couldn't be bothered to look again, to see if they were being watched or not. She just didn't care, as long as he kept bringing her to that sweet release, and let her have the hope of his words.

Draco could hardly believe he'd actually said the words aloud, could scarcely trust that the longing he saw in her eyes was for that thought. He kissed his way along her cheek, down her neck, and was halted by the black cotton of her robes. He didn't pause his plundering as he impatiently tugged the robes over her head and tossed them aside. He barely faltered as he snapped her bra open, and slid that, too, from her shoulders, baring her stiffening peaks to the chill air of the haunted lavatory. He pinched and rolled one between his forefinger and thumb, kissing and nipping his way across her shoulder, pretending he hadn't seen the grey figure resting against the grey stone well above their heads when he'd done away with her clothes. He didn't care if they had an audience, he only cared that Hermione's head was dipping slightly, hanging between her arms as her legs trembled, the aftershocks of her climax making it difficult for her to stand. Draco wrapped his other hand around her stomach, helping to keep her from collapsing as his lips trailed down her spine and his fingers gently abused the hardened pebble that tipped her swaying breast. He could tell she was close to another climax, and pinched harder, thrusting deeper, encouraging her to roll over that second cliff of pleasure.

He held off as long as he could, drawing her enjoyment out as he slapped sharply at the bare skin of her rump, making her yelp and moan, her head rolling about as the opposing sensations brought her an obscene pleasure, his fingers tugging at her hair to hold her head in place making it that much more wicked as her slitted eyes were forced to watch her own face flush with enjoyment as his hand came down again, reddening her other cheek. Her lips parted in a silent groan, and he smacked harder, forcing her to let the sound free, punishing her for keeping it in as he brought her so close to that precipice again. Before he let her come again, he leaned down to whisper in her ear, sweet things, dirty things, enjoying the mindless way she bounced back against him, blissfully unaware that he didn't even have to move his fingers as she rubbed against them and milked his own orgasm from him.

His breath shuddered in and out, and he took a moment to catch his breath, his face buried in her hair, breathing in the scent of her soap, her sweat, and their combined lovemaking. She turned her face, seeking a kiss, and he planted one on her lips, gently letting their mouths rest together as they breathed. Draco stared into her face, trying to memorize each freckle, each small strand of hair that stuck to her forehead. It was memories of her that would see him through this charade, and he felt certain that he didn't have nearly enough of them.

"Meet me again, this weekend?" He petitioned, placing a gentle kiss on her nose, and another on her forehead. He wasn't sure he'd ever be done kissing her.

"Whenever possible, wherever you like." She agreed easily, unbending from over the sink, and pulling her soiled panties back into place. He watched her get dressed without cleaning up, not

missing the meaningful look she gave him that silently said she'd rather clean up, but was purposefully baiting him. They'd just publically broken up, and she'd be walking around, secretly a mess under her clothes because of him. It was just the kind of irony he enjoyed, and the possessive part of him delighted in her being covered in his essence, surrounded by people who thought she was unclaimed. She was still his, secretly, and the mess he knew would be pooling between her thighs was real, tangible proof of that secret. This was real. SHE was real. All he had to do was remember that in the months to come.

The End -

The Epilogue

"I wish you hadn't made me destroy the bracelet. I liked you being able to call for me instantaneously." Draco muttered under his breath, rehashing the same lament he'd uttered countless times.

"And if anyone else had gotten hold of it, you'd have been screwed. Your welcome." Hermione repeated for the thousandth time, sweeping her hands pointlessly across the front of her robes. They were charmed not to wrinkle, and brand new. She felt barely like herself, all done up like a christmas tree, her ears and throat sparkling with so many jewels she could scarcely breathe for fear of losing them.

"Stop fidgeting, or they're bound to say you're nervous, and having second thoughts." Draco insisted, tugging her hand away from where she nervously pressed the glittering silver and diamonds to her skin, reassuring herself that they were still there. He clasped her hand in his own, and she smiled gratefully up at him, secretly glad for the many months he'd already had to deal with the photographs, the articles, the interviews. After the hubub of coming out as a spy against the Death Eaters, he knew exactly how to play the press, and as she stood next to him on the steps of Malfoy Manor, she felt confident in his decisions to dress her so uncomfortably. Standing together in front of the huge house, no one would be able to say she didn't look like she belonged.

"Well, Mr. Malfoy, if you and Mrs. Malfoy are ready, I've got the camera all set up." The photographer called from a couple meters away, ready to photograph the new couple in front of their home.

"We're ready." Hermione answered, squeezing Draco's hand, and smiling up at him with every bit of love she no longer had to hide.

"We've been ready." Draco agreed, smiling back down at her, neither prepared as the flash went off, catching them staring tenderly at each other instead of into the camera.

A/N: heheh, sorry for the abrupt ending, but without dedicating another year to writing Draco's adventures as a spy, this was how I always envisioned it ending. Thank you all for your condolences for my kitty. I'm glad you all stayed with me throughout the story, and hope I didn't disappoint too much. :D

I won't be writing Draco's spy adventures, simply because I've already got too many other fics I'm working on. Feel free to check those out, but so far only one uploaded is another Dramione.
>><http://members.adult-fanfiction.org/profile.php?no=1296979870&view=story&zone=hp>